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Pleasures, Objects, and Advantages,

OF

Literature.

BY THE

REV. ROBERT ARIS WILLMOTT,

INCUMBENT OF BEAR WOOD.

FOURTH EDITION, REVISED.

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AND

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"I CAN wonder at nothing more than how a man can be idle—but of all others, a scholar,—in so many improvements of reason, in such sweetness of knowledge, in such variety of studies, in such importunity of thoughts. To find wit in poetry; in philosophy, profoundness; in history, wonder of events; in oratory, sweet eloquence; in divinity, supernatural light, and holy devotion—as so many rich metals in their proper mines,—whom would it not ravish with delight?"—BISHOP HALL: *Epistle to Mr. Milward.*

"Comforts, yea! joys ineffable they find,
Who seek the prouder pleasures of the mind:
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No! 'tis not worldly gain, although, by chance,
The sons of learning may to wealth advance;
Nor station high, though in some favouring hour
The sons of learning may arrive at power;
Nor is it glory, though the public voice
Of honest praise will make the heart rejoice;
But 'tis the mind's own feelings give the joy,—
PLEASURES SHE GATHERS IN HER OWN EMPLOY."

CRABBE: *The Borough*, Letter xxiv.

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1855.

London:
Printed by STEWART and MURRAY,
Old Bailey.

TO

HIS MOTHER,

THESE

Pleasures of Literature,

THE DIM REMEMBRANCES OF EARLY DAYS,

Are inscribed

BY

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE

TO

THE FIRST EDITION.

When three or four Tourists are met together, who have formerly visited the same countries, it is amusing to observe their different impressions of the scenery. A mountain prospect delighted one, which another overlooked or disregarded; while a fourth remembers an Alpine valley, unknown to his companions, and of unequalled grandeur. The seasons and the hours most favourable to picturesque enjoyment also suggest many friendly discussions; a separate eulogist being found for sunrise, evening and moonlight.

The Author would not be surprised if the readers of the following Discourse should resemble the party of travellers—some complaining of fine scenes of fancy or learning that are left out; and others of inferior views too elaborately presented. Variety must always be an accident of Opinion. The Writer, therefore, offers his sketches for what they may be worth. He believes them to have the merit of truth; they were taken on the spot by one who really made the Tour. He hopes that his errors are neither serious nor many; but the recollection of a remark upon a former publication induces him to say, that he is in the habit of writing the names of Painters and Authors as they appear in the classical Criticism and Biography of the eighteenth century;—in Warton, Gilpin, Price, and Reynolds—without reference to the latest Hand-book, or Dictionary. To

any graver objections he can only reply by adopting the request of one of the oldest living Poets in England, that all the fault-finders will sit down immediately and excel him as much as they can; which he sincerely desires may be as much as they please.

NOTE

TO

THE FOURTH EDITION.

THE Author hopes that this Discourse has been improved by its renewed revision, and that the union of some of the Chapters has given more harmony to the whole. It has been considered expedient in the present edition to omit the marginal references, which would have prevented the compression of the text within the space allotted to it.

ST. CATHERINE'S,
November 24, 1854.

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PLEASURES, OBJECTS, AND ADVANTAGES, OF LITERATURE.

I.—The Design and Limitations of this Discourse.

I do not propose to speak of literature in the widest sense, as including everything that requires invention, judgment, or industry, but only in its decorative character. For, as out of three primitive colours the pencil creates nine, and lesser tints and shades innumerable, so from the elements of Poetry, Eloquence, and Philosophy, the variegated graces of the Divine, the Historian, and the Novelist, are composed. Bacon referred the three parts of learning to the corresponding qualities of the intellect; History to the memory, Poetry to the imagination, and Philosophy to the reason. My subject is the ornamental in knowledge. But since the criterion of usefulness is found in the result, whatever is beautiful is also profitable. The pictures of Raffaelle teach virtue, and a sermon of Taylor is more binding than an Act of Parliament. This truth should be kept in view. Education is the apprenticeship of life.

A discourse upon literature is not unlike a landscape seen from a hill. Only here and there may we hope to catch a glimpse of the great river of learning, "whose head, being far in the land, is, at first rising, little and easily viewed; but still, as you go, it gapeth with a wider bank—not without pleasure and delightful winding—while it is on both sides set with trees and the beauty of various flowers; but still, the further you follow it, the deeper and the broader it is, till, at last, it enwaves itself in the unfathomed ocean." We shall have clearer impressions of what we see, in proportion as our gaze is patient and our objects are few.

Science is not embraced in the pleasures of literature. Refined readers and noble authors are made without it. Ingenuity has endeavoured to show its healthful influence on the inventive faculty; and a biographer of Tasso traces his lucid method to this harsher erudition, and the intricacy of Spenser to the neglect of it. Virgil and Milton are called as witnesses for the argument; but he who sees the symmetry of the *Æneid* in the geometry of the author, could account for the rural sweetness of the *Elegy* by the botany of Gray. Genius finds its own road, and carries its own lamp. The fourth proposition of Euclid troubled Alfieri for several years, yet he could construct a story, and reason in verse. Fleury might question the usefulness of logic, when he observed so many people arguing well who did not know it, and badly who did.

Mathematical studies have one leading defect; they engage the understanding without nourishing it,

and often resemble an elaborate mechanism to convey water, without a spring, or a reservoir, to feed the pipes. In moral impression they are powerless. Burnet puts this objection with force:—"Learning chiefly in mathematical sciences can so swallow up and fix one's thought, as to possess it entirely for some time; but when that amusement is over, nature will return, and be where it was, being rather diverted than overcome by such speculations." These, among other reasons, induced Bossuet to banish science from theological reading, and Fénélon to turn from what he called the diabolism of Euclid. We have the humiliating confession of a most famous English astronomer, to serve as a note for the poetical lamentation, that—

> "Never yet did philosophic tube,
> That brings the planets home into the eye
> Of observation, and discovers—else
> Not visible—His family of worlds,
> Discover Him that rules them: such a veil
> Hangs over mortal eyes, blind from the birth,
> And dark in things divine."

Cowper, pursuing with the eyes of devotion and love the summer sun, as it set over the village spire of Emberton, may have felt his heart swelling with a grander sense of the Creator's glory, than has often quickened the pulse of all the watchers of the stars, from the Chaldeans to Herschel.

II.—The Long Life of Books.

There are two aspects under which we might regard language, as a channel for communicating in-

struction and pleasure. One would be SPEECH. How astonishing it is to know that a man may stand in the crowd of learned or ignorant, thoughtful or reckless hearers—all the elements of reason and passion tumultuously tossed together—and knock at the door of each heart in succession! Think how this wonder has been wrought already. By Demosthenes waving the stormy democracy into a calm, from a sunny hill-side; by Plato enchaining the souls of his disciples, under the boughs of a dim plane-tree; by Cicero in the stern silence of the Forum; by our own Chatham in the chapel of St. Stephen. They knocked and entered; wandered through the bosoms of their hearers; threaded the dark labyrinths of feeling; aroused the fiercest passions in their lone concealment. They did more. In every heart they erected a throne, and gave laws. The Athenian populace started up with one accord and one cry to march upon Philip; the Senate throbbed with indignation at Catiline; and the British Parliament was dissolved for a few hours, that it might recover from the wand of the enchanter.

But it is in the second manifestation of language that the most marvellous faculty resides: the written outlives and out-dazzles the spoken word. The life of rhetoric perishes with the rhetorician; it darkens with his eye, stiffens with his hand, freezes with his tongue. The bows of eloquence are buried with the archers. Where is the splendid declamation of Bolingbroke? It has vanished, like his own image, from the grass-plots of Twickenham.

That intellect, to which the printing-press gives

a body, an unquenchable spirit inhabits. Literature is the immortality of speech. It embalms for all ages the departed kings of learning, and watches over their repose in the eternal pyramids of Fame. The sumptuous cities which have lighted the world since the beginning of time, are now beheld only in the pictures of the historian or the poet. Homer rebuilds Troy, and Thucydides renews the war of Peloponnesus. The dart that pierced the Persian breast-plate moulders in the dust of Marathon; but the arrow of Pindar quivers, at this hour, with the life of his bow; like the discus of Hippomedon,

"Jamque procul meminit dextræ, servatque tenorem."

We look with grateful eyes upon this preservative power of literature. When the Gothic night descended over Europe, Virgil and Livy were nearly forgotten and unknown; but far away, in lone corners of the earth amid silence and shadow, the ritual of Genius continued to be solemnized: without, were barbarism, storm, and darkness; within, light, fragrance, and music. So the sacred fire of Learning burnt upon its scattered shrines, until torch after torch carried the flame over the world.

One of the Spanish romancers shows Cydippe contemplating herself in a glass, and the power of Venus making the reflection permanent. The fable has a new and a pleasanter reading in the history of Literature. A book becomes a mirror, with the author's face shining over it. Talent only gives an imperfect image—the broken glimmer of a countenance. But the features of Genius remain unruffled.

Time guards the shadow. Beauty, the spiritual Venus — whose children are the Tassos, the Spensers, the Bacons — breathes the magic of her love, and fixes the face for ever.

These glasses of fancy, eloquence, or wisdom, possess a stranger power. Illuminated by the sun of fame, they throw rays over watchful and reverent admirers. The beholder carries away some of the gilding lustre. And thus it happens that the light of Genius never sets, but sheds itself upon other faces, in different hues of splendour. Homer glows in the softened beauty of Virgil, and Spenser revives in the decorated learning of Gray.

Art has been less happy in its self-protection. Look at Correggio's "Notte," where the light breaks from the Heavenly Child. Towards the close of the last century, a director of the Dresden Gallery removed the *toning*, and deprived the picture of one of its fairest charms. Fifty years ago, observers complained that the colour was gone from the "Cornaro Family" of Titian. The Helen of Homer and the Faëry Queen of Spenser are safe from such a catastrophe. Lalage has not lost a dimple. The tears still glisten in the eyes of Erminia. The coarsest rubbings of critical pens, or the harsher resolvents of digamma and allegory, have left the features, and even the bloom of expression, unimpaired.

The poem, or the history, is also protected from the restorer. Lord Orford told Gilpin that the great Vandyck at Wilton had been retouched by an inferior pencil, to which some of its discord of

colours may be attributed. Dryden constructed a graceful allegory of Time, leaning over the work of a great master, with that ready pencil and ripening hand which

> "Mellow the colours and imbrown the tint."

But Pope wrote the true story of Art when he said, with the exquisite taste and feeling with which he always spoke of painters, as Milton of music, and Thomson of scenery,—

> "So when the faithful pencil has designed
> Some bright idea of the master's mind,
> When a new world leaps out at his command,
> And ready nature waits upon his hand;
> When the ripe colours soften and unite,
> And sweetly melt into just shade and light;
> When mellowing years their full perfection give,
> And each bold figure just begins to live,
> The treacherous colours the fair art betray,
> And all the bright creation fades away."

It is not pretended that the genius of the pen is safe from all casualties that beset his brother of the pencil. I have not forgotten Hume's letter to Robertson about the gentleman who, sending for a pound of raisins, received them wrapped up in the Doctor's highly-drawn character of Queen Elizabeth. Literature has its complaint as well as its pæan. The splendid libraries of Rome are consumed by fire, and the unknown treasures of Greece perish in the sack of Constantinople. Still the poet and the historian maintain their supremacy over the artist and the sculptor. A mob shatters into dust that statue of Minerva whose limbs seemed to breathe under the flowing robe, and her lips to move; but the fierceness of the Goth, the ignorance of the Crusader, and the frenzy of the polemic,

have not destroyed or mutilated Penelope and Electra. Apelles dies; Æschylus lives. And if we have lost Phidias, Homer gives us a Jupiter in gold.

III.—Classical Studies: their Associations and Interest.

"Books are not seldom talismans and spells."

The line is Cowper's. This charm dwells especially in Greek and Latin writers. Much of it is owing to the season when they are put into our hands. Life is a garden of romance, and every day

"An Idyll with Boccaccio's spirit warm."

Our eyes lend their brightness to the things they look upon. The book is endeared by the friends and the pleasures it recalls. This feeling of remembrance often dims the eye of riper manhood, as it recognises the worn-out school Horace, with its familiar marks. Silent lips and cold hands seem again to welcome and clasp us:—

"Up springs at every step, to claim a tear,
Some little friendship formed and cherished here;
And not the lightest leaf but trembling teems
With golden visions and romantic dreams."

Association is the delight of the heart, not less than of poetry. Alison observes that an autumn sunset, with its crimson clouds, glimmering trunks of trees, and wavering tints upon the grass, seems scarcely capable of embellishment. But if in this calm and beautiful glow the chime of a distant bell steal over the fields, the bosom heaves with the

sensation that Dante so tenderly describes. The pensive joy of the student is awakened in the same manner. The clock of time, measuring the hours of life's departing day, strikes mournfully over the landscape of years. He remembers whom and what he has lost.

Even without this sympathy of association, classic story and fancy have a livelier interest than the modern; they are shaded by the twilight into which they are withdrawn. Delille indicated the defect of the *Henriade* by saying that it was too near to the eye and the age. It has been suggested that Milton might have thrown his angelic warfare into remoter perspective. The fame of a battle-field grows with its years; Napoleon storming the Bridge of Lodi, and Wellington surveying the towers of Salamanca, affect us with fainter emotions than Brutus reading in his tent at Philippi, or Richard bearing down with the English chivalry upon the white armies of Saladin. Nelson leading the line of war-ships against Copenhagen is less picturesque than Drake crowding his canvas after the galleons of Spain. One fleet lies under our eye; the other is enveloped in mist, and,

> "Far off at sea descried,
> Hangs in the clouds."

As we grow older, the poet and the historian of our boyhood and youth become dearer. The thyme of Theocritus is wafted over the memory with a refreshing perfume. By a sort of natural magic, we raise the ghost of each intellectual Pleasure, and make it appear without any dependence upon climate or time. The mind's theatre is lighted for the

Pageant of old Learning to march through it, with all its pomp and music. The nightingale of Colonos enjoys a perpetual May in Sophocles. Pindar beguiles the loneliness of Cowley; while Horace lulls asleep the cares of Sanderson, and the domestic miseries of Hooker.

Unlike Science, Literature is not inductive. Its secrets are never discovered by scholars, tracking obscure hints which nature, or their ancestors, had dropped. A basket, left on the ground and overgrown by acanthus, suggests the Corinthian capital; the contemplation of the sun's rays along a wall produces the achromatic telescope; the movements of a frog reveal the wonders of galvanism; and an idle boy shows the way to perfect the steam-engine. Nothing of this kind has happened in literature. The Egyptian lake, in which some eyes see the source of the old Greek streams, ever melts into bluer distance, like the water-mist of the desert. The Epic begins with the *Iliad*. The curtain rises from the Agamemnon of Æschylus; Pitt borrows of Demosthenes; Robertson does not heighten the colours of Livy; nor Montesquieu outgaze the sagacity of Tacitus.

The Homeric poems are the Pleasures of Literature in an abridgment. They are the sap circulating through every leaf of the tree of knowledge, and shedding blossoms on the furthest bough. Homer, than dramatists more dramatic, was the founder of the theatre, and peopled the stage. The Greek tragedy is the epic recast; the narrative being broken into dialogue, and the poet disappearing in the Chorus.

All the gentler shapes of fancy, seen in the lyrical poetry of Greece, were only flowers growing round his massive trunk, and sheltered by the majesty of his shade.

Nor in verse alone was his presence perceived and felt. See, in the wide-flowing stream of Plato's philosophy, the rich fruits of the Poet's imagination, pouring down into the transparent depths the reflected shadows of their beauty. The ear catches the epic tune in the simpler melodies of Herodotus. It is easy to tell why Arnold's eyes filled with tears at the story of Cleobis and Biton, rewarded for their filial piety by falling asleep in the temple, and dying together; and why he sat by the sick-bed of his dying sister, translating whole books into the quainter English of old chronicles.

The same under-current of song sometimes freshens the dry track of Aristotle's severe inquiries, and betrays its hidden course by unexpected flushes of verdure and bloom over the hard surface. Himself the subject of all criticism, he let down from his heaven of starry thoughts the scales, in which his own genius was to be weighed. And whosoever, in this calm weather of refinement and civilization, sets out upon a voyage of poetical discovery, or pleasure, is

"Led by the light of the Mæonian star."

If we turn to Romance, we see its green world of beauty, pathos, and wisdom, rising from the fruitful waves of the Homeric inundation. Achilles, Hector, and Ulysses present outlines of every hero who has won admiration, or drawn tears. The two

former embody, in outward grace and vigour, the dreams, the enterprise, and the affections, of bright and passionate manhood; the latter is a type of the tried spirit, educated and ennobled by difficulties endured and overcome.

Let Homer signify "a faithful witness;" and who, in portraying the glory, or the shame, of the manly or the womanly heart, is more eloquent or true? The *Odyssey* is a circulating library in one volume. All lights and shades of fiction chase each other along the page. The border-story, the exploits of chivalry, the fairy-legend, the solemn allegory, the picture of manners, the laughter-moving sketch—each drops, in turn, from the mysterious lips of the Asiatic Shakspere. A thousand costly morals are treasured in Telemachus conducted by Mentor. What countless Ladies of Shalott have descended from Calypso, who, in her lonely island of the purple sea,

> "Busied with the loom, and plying fast
> Her golden shuttle, with melodious voice
> Sat chaunting there."

The Homeric characters live and walk among us. Thersites grumbles and sneers; Ulysses constantly finds his way home, as the fortunate adventurer; and Penelope has been reappearing, for the last two centuries, in the deserted, or the tempted wife.

The key of the supernatural, which, in later times, unlocked the haunted chambers of *Udolpho*, was certainly held by him who caused Mount Ida, the Greek fleet, and the Trojan city, to tremble all over as the Gods came down into battle. And not very obscurely may be seen rising over the epic mist, the

battlements of that Castle, which, as we learn from Gray, made Cambridge men "in general afraid to go to bed o'nights." The ghost of Alphonso, growing every moment more gigantic in the moonlight, is not conceived with a fearfuller sweep of Gothic magnificence, than the enormous stride of Achilles in the world of spirits, when he heard that the son was worthy of the father. The Poet's Hades had mightier and stranger inhabitants than *Otranto*. Even the school of horrors may date its beginning from the cave of Polyphemus, when the spear of olive-wood hissed in the flaming socket of his lost eye. Reckon up the enchantments of Circe; the escape from the Sirens; affection in humble life, as exhibited by Eümæus; the retributive phrenzy sent upon the suitors of Penelope, and the bending of the wonderful bow. Call to mind those delicious scenes from nature, which make the reading of his verses to be like opening a window into a garden, when the south wind fans the roses up the wall. Think over his noble sentiments, and his many lessons of wisdom, generosity, and patience; compare his poetical fire—swallowing everything base in its mighty rush—with the mild lustre of Virgil, the artificial glow of Milton, or the accidental flames of Shakspere; and confess that Homer is not only the Poet, but the Historian, the Philosopher, the Painter, the Critic, and the Romancer of the world.

IV.—Mental Delights of Early Life.

There is one pleasure of literature that fades almost as quickly as it blooms. I mean the intensity of belief in what we read; when turning our mind adrift upon a story, we glide, according to its will, beside overhanging gardens, or twilight depths of trees, until, floated beyond the colours and sounds of common scenes and life, we find ourselves under

> "Magic casements, opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, in faëry-land forlorn."

Mr. Stewart thought that his relish for tales of wonder was as lively in the decline of his life as it had been in the beginning, and that he did not value the amusement which they afforded him the less, because his reason taught him to regard them as vehicles of entertainment, not as articles of faith. His explanation refutes itself. The sense of reality gives the charm. Introduce judgment, and the spell is broken. The undoubting mind, which Collins bestowed upon Tasso, is the characteristic only of the great poet, or the youngest reader. Romance is the truth of imagination and boyhood. Homer's horses clear the world with a bound. The child's eye needs no horizon to its prospect. An Oriental tale is not too vast. Pearls dropping from trees are only falling leaves in autumn. The palace that grew up in a night merely awakens a wish to live in it. The impossibilities of fifty years are the commonplaces of five.

What philosopher of the school-room, with the mental dowry of four summers, ever questions the

power of the wand that opened the dark eyes of the beautiful Princess; or subtracts a single inch from the stride of seven leagues? The Giant-killer with the familiar name has the boy's whole heart. And if Johnson in anger put down a little girl from his knee, who had never read *Pilgrim's Progress*, what a frown would he have cast upon her whose tears of joy do not trickle over the Glass Slipper! Burke expresses the sentiments of many hearts:—"I despair of ever receiving the same degree of pleasure from the most exalted performances of genius, which I felt at that age from pieces which my present judgment regards as trifling and contemptible."

The first and the last days of life have, indeed, one sentiment in common. A book interests in proportion as it surprises us. When a friend entered the library of Gray, he found him absorbed in the newspaper. It contained the opening letter of Junius. That venomous glitter of eye had the fascination of a discovery. Boccaccio, climbing by a ladder to the grass-grown loft of a monastery, to disinter a classic fragment from the dusty parchments, and Petrarch feasting his eyes on a *Quintilian*—just brought into daylight—exhibit the sentiment in a more agreeable shape. The remark applies with equal truth to scenery, or any remains of antiquity: whether Raffaelle lingers over the outline of a Greek head upon a medal, or Poussin recognizes some faintly-defined feature of a leaf, by which he may give its portrait with all the accuracy of a botanist. In each case the key to the delight is to be found in the surprise; so far the boy and the sage read a book by the same

light. But, however lively may be the enjoyment of taste unexpectedly gratified, it is weak in comparison with that vivid sense and glow of happiness and wonder, which quicken the pulse and brighten the eye of intelligent childhood. It finds its feeling unconsciously expressed by the poet, who spoke of his own rapture and amazement on first looking into Chapman's *Homer*:—

> "Then felt I like some watcher of the skies,
> When a new planet swims into his ken;
> Or like stout Cortes when, with eagle eyes,
> He stared at the Pacific—and all the men
> Looked at each other with a wild surmise—
> Silent upon a peak in Darien."

The reader is surrounded by a new creation. The poem and the tale in youth are like Adam's early walk in the Garden. In the beautiful words of Burke, "The senses are unworn and tender, and the whole frame is awake in every part." The dew lies upon the grass. No smoke of busy life has darkened or stained the morning of our day. The pure light shines about us. If any little mist happen to rise, the sunbeam of hope catches and paints it. The cloudy weather melts in beauty, and the brightest smiles of the heart are born of its tears.

A first book has some of the sweetness of a first love. The music of the soul passes into it. The unspotted eye illuminates it. Defects are unobserved; sometimes they grow even pleasing from their connection with an object that is dear, like the oblique eye in the girl to whom the philosopher was attached. Later surprises will amuse, and deeper sympathies may cheer us, but the charm loses its freshness, and the tenderness some of the balm.

Perhaps the loving admiration of Virgil, in what are called the dark times of literature, may be explained on this principle. The dawn of civilization is the childhood of a people. The *Æneid* was the fairy tale, and Virgil was the enchanter of the middle ages. The revival of learning gave to it all the sparkle of surprise. A costly book was the home of a Magician. It cast rays from every page, as from a window. A scholar, winding out of mediæval ignorance, and coming suddenly upon one of these illuminated Palaces of Fancy, was not unlike a wayfarer, whose dismal road of snow and tempest brought him in the evening, full of joy and reverence, to the gate of a lighted abbey.

V.—Taste, its Nature, and Charms.

Literature has two eyes—Taste and Criticism. Without these the book is cold and dark as the greenest landscape to a man who is blind. The best definition of Taste was given by the earliest editor of Spenser who proved himself to possess any, when he called it a kind of *extempore judgment*. Burke's view was not dissimilar. He explained it to be an instinct which immediately awakes the emotion of pleasure or dislike. Akenside is clear, as he is poetical, in the question :—

> "What, then, is Taste but those internal powers
> Active, and strong, and feelingly alive
> To each fine impulse? a discerning sense
> Of decent and sublime, with quick disgust
> From things deformed, or disarranged, or gross,
> In species? This nor gems, nor stores of gold,

> Nor purple state, nor culture, can bestow,
> But God alone, when first His sacred Hand
> Imprints the secret bias of the soul."

We may consider Taste, therefore, to be a settled habit of discerning faults and excellences in a moment—the mind's independent expression of approval or aversion. It is that faculty by which we discover and enjoy the beautiful, the picturesque, and the sublime, in literature, art, and nature; which recognizes a noble thought as a virtuous mind welcomes a pure sentiment, by an involuntary glow of satisfaction. But while the principle of perception is inherent in the soul, it requires a certain amount of knowledge to draw out and direct it. The uttermost ignorance has no curiosity. Captain Cook met with some savages who entirely disregarded his ship—the first they had ever seen—as it sailed by them.

Taste is not stationary. It grows every day, and is improved by cultivation, as a good temper is refined by religion. In its most advanced state it takes the title of Judgment. Hume quotes Fontenelle's ingenious distinction between the common watch that tells the hours, and the delicately-constructed one that marks the seconds and smallest differences of time.

A taste, enriched by observation and learning, sensitive even to the tremble of the balance by which the scale is suspended, is probably one of the most desirable endowments of the mind. It enjoys some of the humbler qualities of invention. It brings a dim meaning into light, and not only beholds the image, or the argument, but gazes beyond them into

the rudiments of their creation. It identifies itself with the author; sees what he saw, and feels what he felt. It enters readily into the reply of Paul Veronese to a person who asked him why some figures appeared in shade—"A cloud is passing over the sky, and darkens the picture." Another example will show this power of Taste still more clearly. In Raffaelle's "Burning of Borgho Vecchio," the dresses of the people who carry water toss in the wind; an ordinary observer perceives nothing in the circumstance, but a finer sight learns from it that the conflagration is rising with the gale, and that the flames will conquer.

These forward, inward, and backward looks are the motion and life of Taste. When that eye of the intellect is closed, or injured, the majesty of Genius is obscured, or broken. Men of brightest thoughts, walking abroad in their books, are unknown by the multitude. The Muse who inspired them conceals, with a thick mist, their shape and features from the rude stare of the bystanders—as the Olympian Lady enveloped the Trojans in the palace of Dido—to dawn upon the friendly and purified eyes of reflective Taste, in the fresh bloom of beauty, and in the perfect gracefulness of form.

Molière might read a comedy to his old servant, and alter it according to the effect which it produced, but her opinion could be useful only in sketches of manners, or descriptions of vulgar feelings. Suppose that the grandest pictures of Dante or Æschylus had been exhibited, and her decision on their comparative merits desired; the poet would have been

a Judge leaving his court to consult the Crier on a question of law. There is a familiar story of a Scottish nobleman finding one of his shepherds in a field poring over *Paradise Lost*, and asking him what book he was reading—" Please your lordship," was the answer, " this is a very odd sort of an author; he would fain rhyme, but cannot get at it." The shepherd might have understood Allan Ramsay; Milton was out of his reach.

But not even to its own kindred has Genius been always revealed. Horace censured Plautus. The Library of Petrarch wanted the *Divine Comedy*, until Boccaccio sent it decorated with gold. Daniel, a contemporary of Spenser, and a versifier of much elegance, ridiculed the antique English of the *Faëry Queen*. Walpole sneered at Thomson, and Gray could satisfy himself with admitting the *Castle of Indolence* to contain " some good stanzas." Hurd regretted that Milton had not written of angels in rhyme; Shenstone thought that Spenser might be enjoyed in a humorous light. Blackmore was the Homer of Locke. The critics of the Hôtel de Rambouillet, with Voiture at their head, predicted the failure of Corneille; and Patru, quite a leader of fashion in books, dissuaded Fontaine from writing fables.

Jealousy may often explain blindness. When Le Brun heard of the death of Le Sueur, he said that he felt as if a thorn had just been taken out of his foot. Bellino warns Titian that he will never succeed in painting; and Titian, crowned with fame, scowls upon the dawning honours of Tintoretto. Pordenone,

at Venice, kept a shield and dagger by his side. Not seldom the theologian, the poet, and the man of letters, display the same temper. Bossuet condemns the *Telemachus* of Fénélon; Corneille doubts the dramatic powers of Racine; and Voltaire smiles condescendingly at the humour of Le Sage.

VI.—Taste, an Inheritance and a Fashion.

Taste has frequently an imaginary existence, unconnected with the intellect. It is merely hereditary or acquired, and descends from father to son with his prejudices and estate. The manor-house, the hounds, and Somerville, go together. Certain authors are adopted into families. Bunyan has the sacredness of a legacy; the songs of Watts are bound up with earliest days at mothers' knees; and Gray's *Elegy* incloses a domestic interior of warmth and affection in every stanza. There are hymns which have been intoned through the noses of three generations, and will probably delight the coming age with all the music and endearment of their ancestral twang. In such cases the heart, not the understanding, is the source of interest, and admiration is only a pleasure of memory.

Taste is often one of the aspects of Fashion. Folly borrows its mask, and walks out with Wisdom arm-in-arm. Like virtues of greater dignity, it is assumed. The furniture and decorations of a room are arranged to indicate the serious and graceful sen-

timents of the occupant. Bishop Sanderson looks gravely on Petrarch through his gold frame. Boccaccio sparkles over a grim treatise of Calvin, and a ruffle is smoothed in Aquinas.

Addison sketched a student of this order, in whose library he found Locke *On the Understanding* with a paper of patches among the leaves, and all the classic authors—in wood, with bright backs. To such readers, a new book of which people talk is like a new costume which a person of celebrity has introduced. It is the rage. Not to be acquainted with it is to be ill dressed. The pleasure is not of Literature, but of vanity. The pretended taste is a polite fraud of society.

When a fashion of this kind happens to spread, it takes the character of a disease, raging and vanishing with the virulence and speed of an epidemic. Marino in Italy, Gongora in Spain, and Cowley in England, are varieties of the same type. Butler, sitting with his chaplain, as his habit was, in a deep reverie, suddenly started up, with the exclamation, "Surely whole bodies of men sometimes lose their wits as instantaneously as an individual does!" The Bishop's conjecture might very well illustrate the breaking out of a popular fever in things concerning Taste.

This, like other attacks of delirium, is unmanageable while it lasts. Its will is absolute. Reynolds assured Northcote, that in the beginning of his own career the fame of Kneller was so universal, that a connoisseur presuming to suggest a competitor in *Vandyck, would* have been laughed to scorn.

Spence's criticism on the *Odyssey* was pronounced by persons of reputation to be superior to Addison's papers on Milton. It is pleasant to know that sooner or later the fever departs, and Taste recovers the tone of health. Sixty years ago we meet with *Rasselas*, *Telemachus*, *Cyrus*, and *Marcus Flaminius*, moving as equals in fortune and rank. The authors had passed their examination for honours, and were sent before the world in brackets. Time has changed their places in the calender. Johnson and Fénélon are household words, but who speaks of Sir Charles Ramsay, or Cornelia Knight?

Two other peculiarities may be noticed in the natural history of Taste. The first is the strong propensity in most people to make themselves and their views the measure of excellence. The scenical De Staël, always on the watch for a stage effect, complained that Spenser was the most tedious writer in the world. Nor is the error confined to individuals. It is national. A country grows its taste like its fruit. Germany and romance inspire Schlegel; England and good sense rule Mr. Hallam. Read and contrast those two characters of a famous tragedy. "Why," asks Schlegel, "does the Romeo of Shakspeare stand so far above all the other dramas of that poet, except that in the first delightful gush of youthful passion he deemed that work a fitting shrine for the outpouring of his emotion, with which the entire poem thus became filled and interpenetrated?" "It may be said," observes Mr. Hallam, "that few, if any of his plays are more open to reasonable censure; and we are almost equally struck

by its excellences and its defects. The love of Romeo is that of the most bombastic commonplace of gallantry, and the young lady differs only in being one degree more mad." Were two voices ever heard more contrary or positive?

The second peculiarity resides in what may be characterized as the Taste of the Market. In an age of high civilization, a publisher is a manufacturer. He supplies the demand, but rarely creates it. Helvetius has an amusing story of a person appearing before a tribunal and describing himself as a maker of books. The judge pleaded ignorance of his productions. "I quite believe you," answered the author, with tranquillity; "I write nothing for Paris. When my book is printed, I send the edition to America. I only compose for the Colonies." He who addresses his own century, and flatters its caprices, will probably be as unknown in the next, as the scribbler for remote countries was in Paris.

VII.—A Pure and Cultivated Taste seldom found.

Shenstone said that if the world were divided into one hundred parts, persons of original taste, educated by art, would only form a twentieth portion of the whole. Popular opinion is the old fable of the lion's great supper. The delicacies of the forest were spread before the guests; but the swine asked, "Have you no grains?" The most unpleasing shape of bad Taste is a flippant confidence, with a

strong show of appreciation. An entertaining French writer relates an experiment he made upon the musical feelings of animals. The spectator altogether unmoved was the one which outwardly had the most ear. He munched his thistles, and took no notice at all.

Dryden was certain, if Virgil and Martial had stood for a county, that the epigrammatist would have carried the election; but he consoled himself by reflecting that in matters of Taste the applause of the mob is altogether worthless, and that, not having lands of two pounds per annum in Parnassus, they are not privileged to poll.

Johnson enumerated three classes of literary judges:—(1.) Those who give their opinion from impulse and feeling; (2.) Those who measure a line or a paragraph by rules alone; (3.) And those who, being familiar with the laws of composition, and skilful in applying them, are independent of all. He advised an author to try and satisfy the third class, to esteem the first, but to despise and reject the second. His judgment is upheld by distinguished authorities. "Whoever writes or acts by system," is a remark of Payne Knight, "may stand a chance of being uniformly and invariably wrong." That which pleases a refined and a reflective reader must be good, although the artillery of criticism be played upon it. The falling tear blots out Aristotle.

The most philosophical critic of the eighteenth century perceived that graceful and imaginative composition should be estimated chiefly by its impression upon the mind. Shaftesbury recommended an au-

thor to assemble the best forces of his wit, in order to make an assault on the territories of the heart. Reynolds spoke of taste as depending on those finer emotions which make the organization of the soul. Nor is a remark of Alison undeserving of remembrance, that the exercise of criticism always destroys for a time our sensibility to beauty, by leading us to regard the work in relation to certain laws of construction. The eye turns from the charms of Nature to fix itself upon the servile dexterity of Art.

The unconscious testimony of Gray may be added. When he sent his Ode on the Progress of Poetry to Dr. Warton, he requested him not to show it to mere scholars, who could scan the measures of Pindar, and say the *Scholia* by heart.

Literature is a garden, books are particular views of it, and readers are visitors. Much of their pleasure depends on the guides. It is very important to obtain the assistance of those only who are familiar with the beauties they show, and able, from feeling and practice, to appreciate lights, and shades, and colours. Of this small band Gilpin is a remarkable instance. How happily he clears a passage in the *Iliad* which learning had left in obscurity.

Homer distinguishes Jupiter by a peculiarity of forehead; Gilpin shows us that the poet intended to portray the projecting brow, which casts a broad shadow over the eye. His interpretation is extremely picturesque, and may be compared with Spenser's description of the Dragon:—

"But far within, as in a hollow glade,
Those glowing lamps were set, that made a dreadful shade."

Here is another example. Virgil paints a ship in full sail, and losing sight of the line of coast it is leaving:—

"Protinus aerias Phæacum abscondimus arces."

In the eyes of scholastic readers, "aërial" is only a synonyme for "tall." But a receding object does not suggest merely elevation. Taste again holds up its lamp. Gilpin conjectures that Virgil, who above all poets enjoyed the artistic eye, intending to indicate colour rather than shape, represented the towers bathed in that soft blue of distance, which gives the faint azure tinge to mountain scenery.

This delicacy of discrimination communicates a charm to the *Essays* of Uvedale Price, which will do more to form a true feeling for the beautiful than any single book in the English language. Twining is a younger member of the same family. One specimen will be interesting. Speaking of sounds, and the opportunities which they afford of descriptive imitation, he refers to Milton's "curfew,"

"Over some wide-watered shore,
Swinging slow with sullen roar;"

and teaches us not to consider "swinging," as expressing only the motion of the bell, but to feel that its swing is actually heard in its tone, "which is different from what it would be if the same bell were struck with the same force, but at rest."

The elegance of Gilpin, the graceful knowledge of Price, the sensibility of Twining, and the poetical refinement of the Wartons, are exceptions among commentators. A correction, or a note, is too often *out of harmony* with the passage explained or

amended. A glowing verse of Shakspere becomes dreary in a moment. The sun goes in, when Maratti retouches the picture of Titian.

It may be regretted, that a large capacity and vigorous imagination are so seldom accompanied by Taste. The tender blossom of fancy faded in the hard pressure of Warburton. He has become his own accuser in the annotation he wrote upon these two lines of Shapspeare :—

"And cuckow-buds of yellow hue
Do paint the meadows with delight;"

a description so rural and easy, that we might have expected it to escape even the predatory pen of a commentator. Hear Warburton :—"I would read thus—'*Do paint the meadows much bedight, i. e.* much *bedecked* and *adorned*, as they are in spring-time.'" Yet, if they are much bedight already, they do not require to be painted. The image has two sides. One looks to the eye; the other to the feelings. The emotional appeal is the more affecting. But Warburton runs his pen through it, forgetting how that tuneful friend, whom he delighted to honour, had lashed the conjecturing tribe;—

"Whose unwearied pains
Made Horace dull, and humbled Maro's strains."

The lovers of Shakspere will hope that the last revision of his works is inflicted. His poetry has been too long the orchard of editors, who leave disastrous proofs of their activity in trunks stripped of ivy, shattered boughs, and trampled enclosures. Some squalid article of intellectual dress, which [illegible] all an emendation, sticking among the rich

fruit, proclaims the plunderer to have been up in the tree. It happens, indeed, that the sentiment of anger is occasionally softened by a sense of the ridiculous. One adventurer has no sooner packed up his little bundle of pillage, than he is waylaid by a fierce contemporary on the opposite side. Then begin the clamour, the reproach, and the struggle. Pamphlets are hurled; satirical blows are showered; the quarrel waxes furious:

"Collecti flores tunicis cecidere remissis."

The assertion of Bacon, that the most corrected copies of an author are commonly the least correct, may advantageously be stamped as an introductory motto for every copy of Shakspere.

VIII.—Taste puts an Author in a proper Light.

A good reader is nearly as rare as a good writer. People bring their prejudices, whether friendly or adverse. They are lamp and spectacles, lighting and magnifying the page. It was a pleasant sarcasm of Selden, that the alchemist discovered his art in Virgil's golden bough, and the optician his science in the *Annals* of Tacitus. When juries of Taste are thus empanelled, an author may fairly claim a right of challenge. Passion and self-love corrupt verdicts. What judge would Milton have been of Cowley's discourse upon Cromwell? Calvin, breathing flames and threats against Servetus, found a heresy in every line of his treatises. Trublet had

a contemporary whose periods of contradiction came round in their order. To-day Corneille was despicable, to-morrow the prince of poets.

It is not enough for a reader to be unprejudiced. He should remember that a book is to be studied, as a picture is hung. Not only must a bad light be avoided, but a good one obtained. This Taste supplies. It puts a history, a tale, or a poem, in a just point of view, and there examines the execution. It causes the reader to forget himself; his own century vanishes. He goes out of the familiar into the heroic; rides with the Cid; laces the helmet of Surrey; and flings himself among the magnificent knights of Tasso. His pulse beats with every impulse of delight and sorrow; he braves the tempest with Lear, endures the picturesque torments of Dante, and sinks into delicious dreams in the *Castle of Indolence*. These are some of the pleasures of a poetical faith, which every accomplished reader encourages. In a theatre a candle is the sun, and a painted cloth stands for Venice. The credulity of Taste gives the like help to the illusions of authors, and never sits down in the same temper to the wonders of Camoens and the statistics of M'Culloch.

If an architect were to fix a ladder against a cathedral window on a dull November day, and break up with sharp scrutiny the crimson dress and glory of the saint, the artist's powers would disappear. Colour and expression are gone. The maker of the window never contemplated such an ordeal.

He who disregards the object and the character of

a book, inflicts on its writer an equal wrong. Consider Spenser. He calls his *Faëry Queen* a perpetual allegory, or dark conceit. It should be read under the bright play of the moral, which is the sun to the window. In censuring the obscurity of the poem, we forget that its illumination is coloured. It is the lustre of a ruby, not a crystal. Each thought is tinged by the allegory into a hue of imagination, as the sun in the cathedral is dyed by the glass into stains of amethyst and emerald. The critic who decomposes a stanza into common sense, is the architect spelling out upon his ladder the wonders of the window, instead of gazing up to it from the dim choir, when summer or autumn lights bathe the faces and the drapery from behind.

No window gives all its splendours at once. It must be visited often. A morning or afternoon gleam sheds a different tincture. Moonlight wakes a solemn charm of its own. Winckelmann wished to live with a work of art as a friend. The saying is true of pen and pencil. Fresh lustre shoots from Lycidas in a twentieth perusal. The portraits of Clarendon are mellowed by every year of reflection. The conjecture had only a poetical boldness, which supposed that a student might linger over Shakspere, dwelling upon him line by line, and word by word, until the mind, steeped in brilliancy, would almost scatter light in the dark.

Whoever has spent many days in the company of choice pictures, will remember the surprises that often reward him. When the sun strikes an evening scene by Both, or Berghem, in a particular direc-

tion, the change is swift and dazzling. Every touch of the pencil begins to live. Buried figures arise; purple robes look as if they had just been dyed; cattle start up from dusky corners; trunks of trees flicker with gold; leaves flutter in light; and a soft, shadowy gust—sun and breeze together—plays over the grass. But the charm is fleeting, as it is vivid. In a few minutes the sun sinks lower, or a cloud rolls over it; the scene melts, the figures grow dark, and the whole landscape faints and dies into coldness and gloom.

Life has its gay, hopeful hours which lend to the book a lustre, not less delightful than the accidents of sunshine breathe upon the picture. Every mind is sometimes dull. The magician of the morning may be the beggar of the afternoon. Now the sky of thought is black and cheerless; presently it will be painted with beauty, or spangled with stars. Taste varies with temper and health. There are minutes when the song of Fletcher is not sweeter than Pomfret's. The reader must watch for the sunbeam. Elia puts this difficulty in a pleasant form, and shows us that our sympathy with the writer is affected by the time, or the mood in which we become acquainted with him:—"In the five or six impatient minutes before the dinner is quite ready, who would think of taking up the *Faëry Queen* for a stopgap, or a volume of Bishop Andrewes' sermons? Milton almost requires a solemn service to be played before you enter upon him." Only a zealot in Political Economy begins Adam Smith before breakfast; and he must be fast growing be-

numbed in metaphysics who wishes Cudworth to come in with the dessert.

A celebrated author is reported to have said, "I know not how it is, but all my philosophy in which I was so warmly engaged in the morning, appears like nonsense as soon as I have dined." Perhaps Ariosto selected an unpropitious hour when he presented his *Orlando* to the Cardinal D'Este, and was startled by the inquiry of his Eminence, "Whence had he gathered such a heap of fooleries?"

The man of taste, therefore, will choose his book, so far as he may, according to the season and his own disposition at the moment; waiting for the rays that occasionally dart from it, in some happy transparency and warmth of the mind, as the lover of pictures looks for the flush of sunset on the canvas. By degrees he comes to know that every writer makes a certain demand upon his reader. This is emphatically true of those inquiries or consolations which concern the soul. That ancient Master who always rose from his knees to his pencil, suggests the tone of mind. The serenity of Wordsworth's grandest verse is not for him who receives a box of twenty new volumes every week; but for the serious, musing man, who sits at his own door, and

> "Like the pear,
> That overhangs his head from the green wall,
> Feeds in the sunshine."

IX.—Books which are adapted to different Seasons.

Johnson at dinner sometimes kept a book in his lap, wrapped up in a corner of the table-cloth; and Hammond always took one of these mute friends to cheer his walks. Southey divided them into three classes: one for the table, a second for the fields, and a third for the coach. A closely-printed volume, full of texts, which the mind worked into sermons, was the favourite for a journey. The *Colloquies* of Erasmus stood him "in good stead" for more than one excursion; and the *Utopia* of Sir Thomas More was found serviceable for another. Dr. Warton had a friend who, after reading a book of the *Dunciad*, always soothed himself with a canto of Spenser.

A classification of authors to suit all hours and weathers might be amusing. Ariosto spans a wet afternoon like a rainbow. North winds and sleet agree with Junius. The visionary tombs of Dante glimmer into awfuller perspective by moonlight. Crabbe is never so pleasing as on the hot shingle, when we can look up from his verses at the sleepy sea, and count the

> "Crimson weeds, which spreading flow,
> Or lie like pictures on the sands below:
> With all those bright red pebbles, that the sun
> Through the small waves so softly shines upon."

Some books come in with lamps, and curtains, and fresh logs. An evening in late autumn, when there is no moon, and the boughs toss like foam raking its way back down a pebbly shore, is just the time for *Undine*. A voyage is read with deepest interest in

winter, while the hail dashes against the window. Southey speaks of this delight :—

"'Tis pleasant by the cheerful hearth to hear
Of tempests and the dangers of the deep,
And pause at times, and feel that we are safe;
And with an eager and suspended soul,
Woo terror to delight us."

The sobs of the storm are musical chimes for a ghost-story, or one of those fearful tales with which the blind fiddler in *Redgauntlet* made "the auld carlines shake on the settle, and the bits of bairns skirl on their minnies out frae their beds."

Shakspere is always most welcome at the chimney-corner: so is Goldsmith: who does not wish Dr. Primrose to call in the evening, and Olivia to preside at the urn? Elia affirms that there is no such thing as reading, or writing, but by a candle; he is confident that Milton composed the morning hymn of Eden with a clear fire burning in the room; and in Taylor's gorgeous description of sunrise he found the smell of the lamp quite overpowering. A living poet has charmingly sketched a family group enjoying the evening pleasures of literature :—

"At night, when all assembling round the fire,
Closer and closer draw till they retire,
A tale is told of India or Japan,
Of merchants from Golcond or Astracan,
What time wild Nature revelled unrestrained,
And Sinbad voyaged, and the Caliphs reigned;—
Of Knight renowned from holy Palestine,
And Minstrels, such as swept the lyre divine,
When Blondel came, and Richard in his cell
Heard, as he lay, the song he knew so well;—
Of some Norwegian, while the icy gale
Rings in her shrouds, and beats her iron sail,
Among the shining Alps of Polar seas
Immoveable—for ever there to freeze!
And now to Venice—to a bridge, a square,
Glittering with light—all nations masking there,

With light reflected on the tremulous tide,
Where gondolas in gay confusion glide,
Answering the jest, the song on every side."

But Elia carried his fireside theory too far. Some people have tried "the affectation of a book at noon-day in gardens and sultry arbours," without finding their task of love to be unlearnt. Indeed, many books belong to sunshine, and should be read out-of-doors. Clover, violets, and hedge-roses, breathe from their leaves; they are most loveable in cool lanes, along field-paths, or upon stiles overhung by hawthorn; while the blackbird pipes, and the nightingale bathes its brown feathers in the twilight copse. In such haunts it is soothing to wander with Thomson, Bloomfield, or Clare, in the hand,

"Till declining day,
Through the green trellis shoots a crimson ray."

The sensation is heightened when an author is read amid the scenery or the manners which he describes; as Barrow studied the sermons of Chrysostom in his own See of Constantinople. What daisies sprinkle the walks of Cowper, if we take his *Task* for a companion through the lanes of Weston! Under the thick hedges of Horton, darkening either bank of the field in the September moonlight, *Il Penseroso* is still more pensive. And whoever would feel at his heart the deep pathos of Collins's lamentation for Thomson, must murmur it to himself as he glides upon the stealing wave, by the breezy lawns and elms of Richmond—

"When Thames in summer wreaths is drest,
And oft suspend the dashing oar,
To bid his gentle spirit rest."

X.—Diligence the Handmaid of Taste.

Whether a book be read from the oak lectern of a college library, in the parlour window, or beneath the trees of summer, no fruit will be gathered unless the thoughts are steadily given up to the perusal. Attention makes the genius; all learning, fancy, and science, depend upon it. Newton traced back his discoveries to its unwearied employment. It builds bridges, opens new worlds, and heals diseases; without it Taste is useless, and the beauties of literature are unobserved; as the rarest flowers bloom in vain, if the eye be not fixed upon the bed.

Condillac enforces this habit of patience by an apt similitude. He supposes a traveller to arrive in the dark at a castle, which commands large views of the surrounding scenery. If with sunrise the shutters be unclosed for a moment, and then fastened, he catches a glimpse of the landscape, but no object is clearly seen or remembered—all wavers in a confusion of light and shade. But if the windows be kept open, the visitor receives and retains a strong impression of the woods, fields, and villages, that are spread before his eyes.

The application of the comparison is obvious. Every noble book is a stronghold of the mind, built upon some high place of contemplation, and overlooking wide tracts of intellectual country. The unacquainted reader may be the traveller coming in the dark; sunrise will represent the dawn of his comprehension; and a drowsy indifference is explained by the closing of the windows. In whatever

degree this languor of observation is broken, gleams will break in upon the mind. But the shutters must be fastened back. The judgment and the memory are required in their fulness to irradiate the subject, before the mental prospect stretching over the page can appear in its length, and breadth, and beauty.

Attention is not often the talent of early life. For this cause, the exquisite verses of Virgil which are read in schools, excite little, if any, interest and delight. It was remarked by a most accomplished person, the late Mr. Davison, that the *Principia* of Newton, or the doctrine of Fluxions, may be understood by a youth of eighteen; but that the *Iliad*, the *Epistles* of Horace, or the *History* of Clarendon, can never be embraced, until repeated efforts on the part of the reader himself shall have conducted him to that point of view, in which the writers contemplated their own works.

There is one variety of attention, which the humblest student may acquire. Gassendi informs us that Peiresc always underlined any difficult passage, that he might return to it at a convenient season. Wyttenbach mentions the same practice in Ruhnken. Leibnitz made extracts, wrote his opinion upon them, and then cast the papers aside. Having engraved the picture on his memory, he destroyed the plate. The advice of a scholar, whose piles of learning were set on fire by imagination, is never to be forgotten: Proportion an hour's reflection to an hour's reading, and so dispirit the book into the student. Nor is the following caution less happy than it is quaint:—"Marshal thy notions

into a handsome method. One will carry twice as much weight, trussed and packed up in bundles, than when it lies untoward, flapping and hanging about his shoulders."

Lamb prided himself on being able to read anything which in his heart he felt to be a book. He had no antipathies. Shaftesbury was not too genteel, nor Fielding too familiar. Pope confessed his own miscellaneous amusements in letters, knocking at any door, as the storm drove. Montaigne and Locke were alike to him. The example is dangerous. A discursive student is almost certain to fall into bad company. Homes of entertainment, scientific and romantic, are always open to a man who is trying to escape from his thoughts. But a shelter from the tempest is dearly bought in the house of the plague. Ten minutes with a French novel, or a German rationalist, have sent a reader away with a fever for life.

At the first glance, all study might seem to be wasted which is not devoted to the greatest writer in each particular branch of knowledge; but consideration shows the bold attempt to be useless. The exertion of mind is too much for its strength. A scholar of the average capacity reading an author of the sublimest, is a man of the common size going up a hill with a giant: every step is a strain; the easy walk of the one is the full speed of the other. Frequent intervals of rest are needed. He must come down from the high argument into the plain. Over a dozen pages of Bloomfield he recovers from the fatigue of a morning's journey with Dante, and

a sermon of Blair gives him breath for another climb with Hooker.

We may generalize Ben Jonson's advice to a poet about the choice of a master, to be honoured and followed until he grows very He. It is certainly better to set up one great light in a room, than to make it twinkle with a dozen tapers. Dante had his Virgil; Corneille his Lucan; Barrow his Chrysostom; Bossuet his Homer; Chatham his Demosthenes, in a translation; Gray his Spenser. It is a remark of Warburton that Burke never wrote so well as when he imitated Bolingbroke. Tonson, the bookseller, seldom called upon Addison without finding Bayle's *Dictionary* on the table. And in our own times, Lamb assured Mr. Cary, that Coleridge fed himself on Collins. "I guess good housekeeping," was the saying of Fuller, "not by the number of chimneys, but by the smoke." Ben Jonson's exhortation, therefore, may be received, but only in a large and liberal spirit. Reverence is not to be debased into superstition. Choose an old field, and work in it; but never sink into the serf of the proprietor. Be the lord, while you are the tiller, of the ground. Recollect the warning of Pliny, and bind a laurel upon the plough.

XI.—Criticism, its Curiosities and Researches.

Criticism is Taste put into action. A true criticism is the elegant expression of a just judgment. It includes Taste, of which it is the exponent and

the supplement. The frame of Genius, with its intricate construction and mysterious economy, is the subject of study. The finest nerve of sensation may not be overlooked. But Criticism must never be sharpened into anatomy. The delicate veins of Fancy may be traced, and the rich blood that gives bloom and health to the complexion of thought be resolved into its elements. Stop there. The life of the imagination, as of the body, disappears when we pursue it.

Many pleasures and some advantages of literature are bound up in the name of Criticism. Its history would be the annals of the mind. An acquaintance with it is scarcely less necessary to the student than the alphabet of antiquities is to the traveller. The *Divine Comedy* should have its hand-book, as well as the Coliseum. Criticism is introduced in this discourse only as it relates to the intellectual gratification of readers, and the examples offered are merely short aids to reflection.

One interesting feature of Criticism is seen in the ease with which it discovers what Addison called the specific quality of an author. In Livy, it will be the manner of telling the story; in Sallust, personal identification with the character; in Tacitus, the analysis of the deed into its motive. If the same test be applied to painters, it will find the prominent faculty of Correggio to be manifested in harmony of effect; of Poussin, in the sentiment of his landscapes; and of Raffaelle, in the general comprehension of his subject.

The popular characters of authors are frequently

only vulgar errors. They are copies of portraits for which the poet or the historian never sat. We have an example in Pindar. During how many years has he been called the tumultuous, the ungovernable; as if his fiery and unbroken fancy, scorning the rein, continually ran away with his judgment. Yet Pindar is as methodical as Collins, or Gray. To borrow an illustration from his own races, he has his thoughts always in hand, and their fiercest plunges only carry the chariot nearer to the goal.

A single thread guides the critical eye through a labyrinth of character. It infers the lowly station, as it might prove the ancientness of Homer from internal evidence. He tells us what a thing cost. Some pages of the *Iliad* are a priced catalogue. In the style of Virgil the intimation of rank is equally plain. He retreats from all contact with poverty. In the herdsman's hut, or under a tree with a shepherd, he has the air of a person of quality, unbending into simplicity and bucolics. He receives a maple cup from a peasant with the grace of a courtier, who is thinking all the time upon the last *amphora* which Mecænas opened.

The history of Crabbe offers a proof of this penetration. Lord Jeffrey had remarked of his similes that, ingenious and elaborate as they are, they seemed to be the thoughtful productions of a busy and watchful fancy, rather than the spontaneous growth of a heated imagination. The poet admitted the conjecture to be well founded:—"Jeffrey is quite right; my usual method has been to think of such [illegible]strations, and insert them after finishing a tale."

An agreeable function of Criticism is exercised in the recognition of a picture, or a book, by some distinctive expression which is ascertained to belong to a particular workman. A connoisseur lays his hand on Mieris without hesitation. He carries the catalogue in his eye down a gallery; spelling Rembrandt in shadows, while the deep purple of a distance prepares him for Poussin.

The most original genius has a favourite formula. In Titian it is a crimson cap; in Tintoretto, the lowering face of a Moor; in Wouverman, a white horse; in Domenichino, an angel; in N. Berghem, a woman riding on an ass; in Hobbema, the dewy lustre of trees. Cuyp glows all over in a haze of warmth, and the little farce upon canvas discloses Jan Steen. Even amid the inexhaustible fruitfulness of Rubens, Reynolds recognized one smooth, flat face, continually recurring. Every "Madonna" of Raffaelle is descended from the same type. The high, smooth, round, forehead, with the thin hair, re-appears in each change of posture and expression. The Dutch artist is the most striking instance of all. Under his hand, the river of Eden is a canal; and he builds Babylon upon piles.

Authors afford equal opportunities to critical discernment. A phrase, or an epithet in a book, is a particular hue, or shade, of a picture, It identifies the writer. We know a Chaucer, as we know a Van Eyck. St. Paul uses one word twenty-six times, and it occurs in no other part of the New Testament, except in the parable of the Barren Fig-Tree. South is discovered immediately by the

lash of a sentence, and Andrewes by the mechanism of his exposition. A costly Latinism encircles the gold of Taylor; and the rising incense of devotion—sweeter than any odours of poetry—assures a reader that he is bending over a homily of Leighton.

Pope wished to have translated Homer in Asia, with present life to enlighten the past. In our days, he might have brought all Persia to his lawn. The printing-press has made Criticism a citizen of every kingdom. It is naturalised in antiquity. It talks with Aristotle, and lives with Cuvier. Every harvest-field of learning is to be gleaned. No fragment of information is without a value. If a colour and a word establish the relationship of a picture and a book, a single fact in natural history may suffice to disprove it. Take a simple instance. The *Batrachomuomachia* was long circulated with the Homeric poems; but criticism is prepared to pronounce it spurious, from finding in it a reference to the cock. That bird is not mentioned in the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*, and is supposed to have been a stranger in Greece, until the soldiers of Alexander brought home the jungle-fowl of India, and domesticated it in Europe.

Criticism pursues with lively interest the winding and contrary paths, by which gifted men have travelled to fame. Genius is the instinct of enterprise. A boy came to Mozart, wishing to compose something, and inquiring the way to begin. Mozart told him to wait. "You composed much earlier." "But asked nothing about it," replied the musician. M. Angelo is hindered in his childish studies of art;

Raffaelle grows up with pencil and colours for playthings: one neglects school to copy drawings, which he dared not to bring home; the father of the other takes a journey to find his son a worthier teacher. M. Angelo forces his way; Raffaelle is guided into it. But each looks for it with longing eyes. In some way or other, the man is tracked in the little footsteps of the child. Dryden marks the three steps of progress:—

"What the child *admired*,
The youth ENDEAVOURED, and the man ACQUIRED."

Dryden was an example of his own theory. He read Polybius, with a notion of his historic exactness, before he was ten years old. Witnesses rise over the whole field of learning. Pope, at twelve, feasted his eyes in the picture-galleries of Spenser. Murillo filled the margin of his school-books with drawings. Le Brun, in the beginning of childhood, drew with a piece of charcoal on the walls of the house. The young Ariosto quietly watched the fierce gestures of his father, forgetting his displeasure in the joy of copying from life, into a comedy he was writing, the manner and speech of an old man enraged with his son.

Cowley, in the history of his own mind, shows the influence of boyish fancies upon later life. He compares them to letters cut in the bark of a young tree, which grow and widen with it. We are not surprised to hear from a schoolfellow of the Chancellor Somers that he was a weakly boy, who always had a book in his hand, and never looked up at the play of his companions; to learn from his affection-

ate biographer, that Hammond at Eton sought opportunities of stealing away to say his prayers; to read that Tournefort forsook his college class, that he might search for plants in the neighbouring fields; or that Smeaton, in petticoats, was discovered on the top of his father's barn, in the act of fixing the model of a windmill which he had constructed. These early traits of character are such as we expect to find in the cultivated lawyer, who turned the eyes of his age upon Milton; in the Christian, whose life was one varied strain of devout praise; in the naturalist, who enriched science by his discoveries; and in the engineer, who built the Eddystone Lighthouse.

The instinct of enterprise is combined with the instinct of labour. Genius lights its own fire; but it is constantly collecting materials to keep alive the flame. When a new publication was suggested to Addison, after the completion of the *Guardian*, he answered, "I must now take some time, *pour me délasser*, and lay in fuel for a future work." The strongest blaze soon goes out when a man always blows and never feeds it. Johnson declined an introduction to a popular author with the remark, that he did not desire to converse with a person who had written more than he had read.

It is interesting to follow great authors or painters in their careful training and accomplishing of the mind. The long morning of life is spent in making the weapons and the armour, which manhood and age are to polish and prove. Usher, when only twenty years old, formed the daring resolution of reading all the Greek and Latin Fathers, and with

the dawn of his thirty-ninth year he completed the task. Hammond, at Oxford, gave thirteen hours of the day to philosophy and classical literature, wrote commentaries on all, and compiled indexes for his own use. Milton's youthful studies were the landscapes and the treasury of his blindness and want.

The sister art teaches the same lesson. Claude watched every colour of the skies, the trees, the grass, and the water. The younger Vandervelde transferred the atmospheric changes to large sheets of blue paper, which he took in the boat when he went, as he said, in his Dutch-English, a "skoying" on the Thames. "I have neglected nothing," was the modest explanation which N. Poussin gave of his success.

With these calls to industry in our ears, we are not to be deaf to the deep saying of Lord Brooke, the friend of Sidney, that some men overbuild their nature with books. The motion of our thoughts is impeded by too heavy a burden; and the mind, like the body, is strengthened more by the warmth of exercise than of clothes. When Buffon and Hogarth pronounced genius to be nothing but labour and patience, they forgot history and themselves. The instinct must be in the mind, and the fire be ready to fall. Toil alone would not have produced the *Paradise Lost*, or the *Principia*. The born dwarf never grows to the middle size. Rousseau tells a story of a painter's servant, who resolved to be the rival or the conqueror of his master. He abandoned his livery to live by his pencil. But, instead of the Louvre, he stopped at a sign-post. Mere

learning is only a compiler, and manages the pen as the compositor picks out the type—each sets up a book with the hand. Stone-masons collected the dome of St. Paul's, but Wren hung it in air.

Ease, when it has become constitutional, is called Grace. Until he had got his one tune by heart, Gibbon wrote slowly. The simpler periods of Goldsmith flowed with painful effort. "Everybody," was his own complaint, "wrote better, because he wrote faster than I." Cowper confesses that his pleasant *Task* was constructed with weariness and watching. Burke's gorgeous imagery had very little of that rush which is commonly heard in it. Addison wore out the patience of his printer; and Dr. Warton assures us, that when a whole impression of a *Spectator* was nearly worked off, he would frequently stop the press to insert a new preposition.

The authority of Pope may seem to contradict the argument. He declared that what he wrote the quickest pleased him best, as the *Essay on Criticism*, the *Rape of the Lock*, and a large portion of the *Iliad*. But the miracle melts as we look at it. Of the first poem the materials were previously digested in prose; the Sylph-machinery was a supplement to the second; and the manuscript of the third may be consulted in our National Library. A truer portrait of the poet in his study will be found in his elegant epistle to Jervas, where he reminds his friend of their meditative hours,—

> "How oft in pleasing tasks we wear the day,
> While summer suns roll unperceived away!
> *How oft our slowly-growing works impart,*
> While images reflect from art to art."

Speed in composition is a questionable advantage. Poetic history records two names which may represent the swift and the thoughtful pen—Lope de Vega and Milton. We see one pouring out verses more rapidly than a secretary could write them; the other building up, in the watches of the dark, a few majestic lines; one leaving his treasures to be easily compressed into a single volume; the other, to be spread abundantly over forty-six quartos; one gaining fifteen pounds; the other, a hundred thousand ducats; one sitting at the door of his house, when the sun shone, in a coarse coat of gray cloth, and visited only by admiring strangers from foreign countries; the other followed by crowds whenever he appeared, while even the children shouted after him with delight.

It is only since the earth has fallen on both, that the fame and the honours of the Spaniard and the Englishman have been changed. He who nearly finished a comedy before breakfast, now lies motionless in his small niche of monumental biography; and he who, long choosing, began late, is walking up and down in his singing robes, and with the laurel round his head, in the cities of many lands; having his home and his welcome in every devout heart, and upon every learned tongue of the Christian world.

Of course, the frequent writer will, in time, be quick. The practised is the ready hand. Raffaelle, who painted a head with such fine touches that it seems to have been finished by single hairs, could almost work as fast as Rembrandt, who laid on

his colour with a palette-knife. Dryden's mastery of language and rhyme enabled him to remit to Tonson an instalment of seven thousand five hundred verses; Johnson, from the fulness of his mind, produced *Rasselas* in the evenings of one week; and Scott wrote the two last volumes of *Waverley* in twenty-six afternoons of summer.

Genius easily hews out its figure from the block; but the sleepless chisel gives it life. We have, in the practice of Titian, an interesting view of the steps by which excellence is won. He began a picture by striking off an outline in four pencillings; he then put it aside, sometimes allowing months to go by before he looked at it again; when he returned to his work, it was with the watchfulness of a rival. The last corrections were given by daily touches. Virgil composed verses in the same manner. He commenced a figure or a landscape in rough sketches. Rare drawings of a painter should we have found in his scattered notes! What studies did he make of that Carthaginian queen, before she rose from his poetry in the splendour of her charms! He produced a few lines in the morning, and spent days or months in shaping and adorning them. He was the artist rubbing in tints over the delicate surface of words—

"And Titian's colour looks like Virgil's art."

Buffon has told us how patiently he moulded his loose sentences into symmetry. So often did he turn a paragraph in his mind and on his tongue—speaking it over and over until his ear was satisfied

—that he was able to repeat whole pages of his works.

This transparency of diction is only found in productions of the strongest Genius. A burning invention makes it. That exquisite material, through which we gaze on our woods and gardens, obtains its crystalline beauty after undergoing the processes of the furnace. It was melted by fire before the rough particles of sand disappeared, and the fibres of the leaf, or the streaks of the tulip, were discerned. Similar operations refine language. Imagination mingles the harsh elements of composition until—each coarse, shapeless word being absorbed by the heat—they brighten into that smooth and unclouded style, through which the slightest emotions of the heart, and the faintest colours of fancy, are reflected.

The theologian, the poet, the historian, or the philosopher, who has this lucidness of utterance, is certain of a wide and lasting reputation. It made Ariosto the Homer of Italy, and gathered all ranks and ages to his knees. Taste and Science, Love and Beauty, hung upon his lips. He was the companion of the maiden and the scholar, of a starry Galileo, and a knight in armour.

Whatever is pure is also simple. It does not keep the eye on itself. The observer forgets the window in the landscape it displays. A fine style gives the view of Fancy—its figures, its trees, or its palaces—without a spot. But to a diseased eye, crystal is cold. Hence it happens that the lawful masters of language are sometimes deposed, for a eason, by the daring of literary revolutionists. A

barbaric uproar drowns the musical voices of Addison and his brethren. One idiom jangles another out of tune. In reading some modern authors, who have nothing of the tripod or the oracle, except the frenzy and the darkness, we are reminded of the pleasant correction which Ménage inserted in the *Délices d'Esprit* of a flighty Frenchman : "Au lieu de *Délices*, lisez *Délires*."

The exhibition of real strength is never grotesque. Distortion is the agony of weakness. It is the dislocated mind whose movements are spasmodic. Pressure of thought may overburden sentences with meaning, as in the *Analogy* of Butler, or in the rhymes of Cowley. Swift confessed to Pope that he had been obliged to read parts of the *Essay on Man* twice over. It was not obscure, but deep. The *Bard* of Gray and Collins's *Ode* on the poetical character seem dark; the former from its historical, the latter from its metaphysical, allusions. Numerous passages of Milton are incomprehensible to a reader whose knowledge is not large in chivalry, romance, or classical legends. Take the magnificent description of Satan arming his legions, and feeling his heart swell with pride, as he gazes upon the myriads before him :—

> "For never since created man
> Met such imbodied force, as named with these
> Could merit more than that small infantry
> Warr'd on by cranes; though all the giant brood
> Of Phlegra with th' heroic race were join'd
> That fought at Thebes and Ilium, on each side
> Mix'd with auxiliar gods; and what resounds
> In fable or romance of Uther's son,
> Begirt with British and Armoric knights;
> And all who since, baptized or infidel,

Jousted in Aspramont or Montalban,'
Damasco, or Marocco, or Trebisond,
Or whom Biserta sent from Afric shore,
When Charlemain, with all his peerage, fell
By Fontarabia."

In such cases, notes, which are the dictionary of ignorance, will open the chambers of imagery to one who knocks; and when the sentiment, or the illustration, has been disengaged, it delights the eye of taste by its symmetry or grandeur. A foreign writer may fairly claim of his reader a sufficient acquaintance with the language. The idioms of Genius will always present obscurities to the uninformed; they are to be acquired, as a man learns to translate a dialect. When the reader is competent, Genius is bright. We do not expect Waller to appreciate Milton. But, in general, he who understands himself is easily understood. "The man who is not intelligible, is not intelligent."

XII.—Criticism enforces Unity of Purpose.

He runs uncertainly who has two goals. The flight becomes a flutter; the race, a circle. Raffaelle might lay down his pencil to build a cathedral; and L. da Vinci fill a page with a problem and a caricature. Some gifted adventurer is always sailing round the world of art and science, to bring home costly merchandise from every port. But the warning truth still remains:—

"One science only will one genius fit:
So wide is art, so narrow human wit."

No fact in ancient history is less disputable than

its divisions. The Greek stage encouraged no Garrick to smile away pathos in farce. The maddened Orestes never disappeared in the mimic of the *Clouds*.

The caution is wise: poet and hero are weak on one side. Milton's humour and Hobbes' poetry are among the saddest exhibitions of literature. Bentley's hand forgot its cunning when he laid it on *Paradise Lost*. Longinus says, that as often as Demosthenes affected to be pleasant in a speech, he made himself ridiculous; and if he happened to raise a laugh, it was chiefly upon himself. Dante showed an imperfect acquaintance with the capacities of Art, when he recommended the *Revelation of S. John* to Giotto, as a subject for the pencil. The enemies of Boileau beheld him shorn in an ode; Corneille stumbled in comedy; Sterne was beaten by his valet in learning Italian; and a regimental schoolmaster might have taken down Marlborough in spelling. Instances of intellectual infirmity are seen admonishing the scholar upon every side. Some muscle, or nerve, of arm or of eye, is always weak. Pope tossed Theobald into the *Dunciad*, but he, clinging to the back of Shakspere, out-ran his tormentor as an editor. The illustration of Temple is forcible as it is homely:—"The abilities of man must fall short on one side or other, like too scanty a blanket when you are a-bed: if you pull it upon your shoulders, you leave your feet bare; if you thrust it down upon your feet, your shoulders are uncovered."

Art, not less eloquently than literature, teaches her children to venerate the single eye. Remember Matsys. His representations of miser-life are breath-

ing. A forfeited bond twinkles in the hard smile. But follow him to an altar-piece. His Apostle has caught a stray tint from his usurer. Features of exquisite beauty are seen and loved; but the old nature of avarice frets under the glow of devotion. Pathos staggers on the edge of farce. The sacred pictures of Matsys are the sermons of Sterne.

Talents to strike the eye of posterity should be concentrated. Rays, powerless while they are scattered, burn in a point. Great men have always one governing series of thoughts. We are not surprised to be told that a fly interested Malebranche more than all the Greek and Roman history. Milton's confession about having only the use of his left hand in prose, is a text and a homily in Criticism.

The thought is pleasing, though visionary, that authors might reap a larger harvest, by writing books as the brothers Both painted landscapes, or as Rubens and Snyders sometimes worked together. Pope was enriched by the gold of Bolingbroke, notwithstanding its alloy. Would not Shakspere and Ben Jonson have played a grander strain in concert? It is certain that the revision of friends often imparts a new lustre. In this way Lucretius grew brighter under the pen of Cicero; the *Maxims* of Rochefoucault received the exquisite temper of their edge; the sharpest eyes in Port Royal picked out the overlooked weeds of Pascal, or gathered passages for his *Provincial Letters;* and the friendly solicitude of Secker disentangled the intricate argument of Butler.

XII.—Criticism the Source o Delights.

Every river flows into branching streams—pleasant to the eye and the ear—that lose themselves among green meadows, or the pebbles of village brooks. Criticism, pursuing its way through the fruitful country of learning, detaches from its current many small tributaries, of which each has its own little patches of corn-land and trees to wander along. All possess interest for the patient explorer; whether he considers the varying times of the mind's flower and ripeness, the influence of air and climate upon its bloom and growth, the art of repairing injured works, or the obligations of authors to their predecessors.

(1.) Lord Bacon considered that invention in young men is livelier than in old, and that imaginations stream into their minds more divinely. He has not defined the boundary of youth. His own thirty-sixth year had come, when he committed to the press those golden meditations which he called *Essays*. But it is noticeable that his style opened into richer bloom with every added summer of thought. Later editions contain passages of beauty not found in the earlier; and his *Advancement of Learning*, published when he was forty-four, beams with the warmest lights of Fancy. His contemporary Hobbes was sixty-three before he put forth his evil claim to be remembered in the *Leviathan*. Sterne was forty-six when *Tristram* brought London to his

door, and furnished him with the boast that he was engaged to dinners fourteen deep. I turn to greater examples. Shakspere concluded his dramatic life at forty-seven, with the charming story of the *Tempest*, of his Plays the most joyous and airy; it is probable that Milton had reached the same age when he began the *Paradise Lost*. Why should the broad river become narrower while unnumbered springs continue to flow into it? Raffaelle died in his thirty-eighth year, with his hand on the "Transfiguration;" are we to look upon that picture as the mightiest effort of an art that could climb no higher? Was there no fourth manner for the solemn light and stillness of riper manhood, which would have melted warmer colours into his earlier drawing, speaking more fervently to the eye, without weakening his appeal to the affections?

It is impossible to make absolute laws for the mind. It has seasons of ripeness and beauty when the colour and the flavour of its fruit are in perfection. But they are irregular; sometimes they come early. Ben Jonson wrote *Every Man in his Humour* at twenty-two; and Paul Potter dropped his pencil before he was twenty-nine. Occasionally the life of the intellect seems to run itself out in one effort. All the fine juice of the vine flows into a single grape. Zurbaran's early picture divided with Raffaelle the applause of criticism in the Louvre. Akenside, at twenty-three, had a lustre of invention which each succeeding year seems to have diminished. It might be that the scholar over-laid the poet; that the essence of his fancy was drawn off in the Labo-

ratory; or that the torrent of youth brought down a few lumps of gold, and his mind had no rich vein imbedded in it, for the full strength of manhood to work.

Sometimes the flower unfolds itself in the noon. Francia stood on the threshold of his fortieth year when a picture by Perugino made him a painter. In a few instances, it keeps its choicest odours for the evening, or the night. Dryden was nearly seventy when he completed his charming copies of Chaucer: a cripple, he tells us, in his limbs, but conscious of no decay in the faculties of his soul, excepting that his memory was somewhat weaker, and to compensate for this loss he found his judgment increased. "Thoughts come crowding in so fast upon me that the only difficulty is to choose or to reject."

M. Angelo had nearly reached the years of Dryden when he gave the "Last Judgment" to the world. The splendour of Titian shone most towards its setting; his wonderful portrait of Pope Paul the Third was painted at seventy-two, and his magnificent "Martyrdom of St. Lawrence" at eighty-one. Sixty-four summers only mellowed into ruddier tints the nosegay of Rubens; and Buffon assured a friend that, after passing fifty years over his desk, he was every day learning to write.

But though the times of fruit-bearing may vary in different minds, we generally find that several fine seasons follow each other in succession. Consider the five years of Milton's life, between 1634 and 1639, when he wrote *Comus*, *Lycidas*, *Arcades*, and

his shorter poems; take the same period in the history of Shakspere, beginning in 1606 with *Macbeth*, and ending, in 1611, with *Othello;* or cut off an equal length from the record of Jeremy Taylor's struggles and toils: see him contributing to his own and every age, between 1647 and 1652, the *Liberty of Prophesying*, the *Great Exemplar*, the *Holy Living and Dying*, and all his nobler sermons. These are precious chapters in the biography of Genius; we ought not to be surprised if some pages of weaker interest are found before or after them.

Walking in the fields during the last summer, I saw the sun—then going down in great glory—suddenly cut in two by a strip of dark cloud, which, nevertheless, showed itself by the colour dimly shining through it to be connected with that magnificent luminary; and while I stood, the vapour melted, and the sun re-appeared in all its large effulgence. My thoughts turned to the great lights which have been given to rule the intellectual day. I called to remembrance how the broad splendour of Genius, as it rolls along the sky of life from the morning until the evening, has its cold intervals of shadow. The radiance of its manifestation is often broken. An inferior book or picture comes between the rising and the setting glory. A black bar of cloud seems to cut the great light in the middle. It is a noble and comforting recollection that when the gloom passes the mind breaks forth again, and the poet or the philosopher sinks behind the horizon of time, as he rose above it, in a full orb.

The light of the morning and the evening is

equally beautifnl, but it differs in tone and hue. So does the Imagination in the young and the old. Yet it may stream divinely into each. The tender green and the nightingale's hymn belong to the spring; the full rose and the red moon, to the summer and the harvest. The portraitures of dreams upon the eyes under trees, the smiles of love, and the enchantments of hope, are the joy and the heritage of youth; the guardianship of angels, the victories of the soul, and the calm beauty of Paradise, are the illumination and the reward of manhood and age.

(2.) It has been a subject of ingenious speculation if country, or weather, may be said to cherish or check intellectual growth. Jeremy Collier considered that the understanding needs a kind climate for its health, and that a reader of nice observation might ascertain from the book in what latitude, season, or circumstances, it had been written. The opponents are powerful. Reynolds ridiculed the notion of thoughts shooting forth with greater vigour at the summer solstice or the equinox; Johnson called it a fantastic foppery.

The atmospheric theory is as old as Homer. Its laureate is Montesquieu. The more northerly you go, he said, the sterner the man grows. You must scorch a Muscovite to make him feel. Gray was a convert. One of the prose hints for his noble fragment of a didactic poem runs thus:—"It is the proper work of education and government united to redress the faults that arise from the soil and air." Berkeley entertained the same feeling. Writing to Pope from Leghorn, and alluding to some half-

formed design he had heard him mention of visiting Italy, he continues :—" What might we not expect from a Muse that sings so well in the bleak climate of England, if she felt the same warm sun, and breathed the same air, with Virgil and Horace?"

When Dyer attributes the faults of his *Fleece* to the Lincolnshire fens, he only awakes a smile. Keats wrote his Ode to a nightingale—a poem full of the sweet south—at the foot of Highgate-hill. But we have the remark of Dryden—probably the result of his own experience—that a cloudy day is able to alter the thoughts of a man ; and, generally, the air we breathe, and the objects we see, have a secret influence upon our imagination. Burke was certain that Milton composed *Il Penseroso* in the long-resounding aisle of a mouldering cloister, or ivied abbey. He beheld its solemn gloom in the verse. The fine nerves of the mind are braced, and the strings of the harp are tuned, by different kinds of temperature. " I think," Warburton remarked to Hurd, " you have often heard me say, that my delicious season is the autumn—the season which gives most life and vigour to my intellectual faculties. The light mists, or, as Milton calls them, the steams that rise from the fields in one of these mornings, give the same relief to the views that the blue of the plum gives to the appetite."

Mozart composed, whenever he had the opportunity, in the soft air of fine weather. His *Don Giovanni* and the *Requiem* were written in a bowling-green and a garden. Chatterton found a full moon favourable to poetic invention, and he often sat up

all night to enjoy its solemn shining. The spirits of Shelley rose joyously whenever the wind blew from the north-west. Winter-time was most agreeable to Crabbe. He delighted in a heavy fall of snow, and it was during a severe storm which blocked him within doors, that he portrayed the strange miseries of Sir Eustace Grey.

(3.) The art of emendation demands the union of many talents. Porson adjusting the text of Euripides, is the architect restoring a palace. The pursuit of Genius into its treasure-house is an inferior, but a more interesting accomplishment. It is one which all readers may share, and which deserves to be called a pleasure, if not an object and advantage, of literature. The need of it is the greater, as memories are often weak. Addison copied into the *Spectator*, from an Italian ethical work of the sixteenth century, a story about a mirror and a lady, but omitted to state its foreign descent. The occupation is to be enjoyed with caution. A coincidence is not a robbery. The most agreeable of all satirists has playfully exhibited a clever curiosity gone astray, in the portrait of a scholar who reads all books:—

> "And all he reads assails,
> From Dryden's *Fables* down to Durfey's tales;
> With him most authors steal their works—not buy:
> Garth did not write his own *Dispensary*."

Swift seems to indicate the fair distinction between the theft of the scribbler and the loan of the author, by saying that the lighting a candle at a neighbour's fire does not affect our property in the wick and flame. Milton held a torch to Ovid, and Taylor to Chrysostom. But both carried materials for burn-

ing. The ignible substance belonged to themselves.

Some imitation is involuntary and unconscious. No mighty intellect can be lost. Time only covers to reproduce it: there is nothing in the poet, or the philosopher,

> "But doth suffer a sea-change
> Into something rich and strange."

Plato dies in the school to appear in the pulpit. Genius is nourished from within and without. Its food is self-grown and gathered. Like a rich-bearing tree, it absorbs the juices of the soil and the balm of the air, but draws from its own blood the life that swells out the trunk, and gives colour and flavour to the fruit.

XIV.—The Lessons of Criticism.

(1.) An artist once objected to a famous painter, that he could never tell where, in nature, he found those gorgeous hues, which seem to inflame his landscape, and shower purple and crimson over the field and the river. The ear of Society caught up the reply,—"I dare say that you never see such colours; but do you not wish that you could?"

One of the lessons of Criticism is the folly of making our own knowledge a standard of probability. Consider the bone of a reptile in the hand of a ploughman, and of Owen. The common observer notices only one hue of green, while the cultivated eye perceives a gray tint in the sun's reflection on leaves and grass. An Abyssinian traveller saw in

the Bay of Tajoura the azure and gold of the most extravagant picture; and Mrs. Houstoun speaks of the autumn foliage in American woods as bewildering the describer by its dazzling varieties. "If a painter were to endeavour to depict them to life, he would be called as mad as Turner." A testimony yet more extraordinary is heard in Colonel Mitchell's exploring expedition into the interior of Tropical Australia. One day his path conducted him into a valley so sublimely grotesque that he called it "Salvator Rosa." A river was surrounded by hills, of which some took the shape of cathedrals in ruins, and others of decayed fortifications. The comparison that the scene suggested to the visitor was a sepia landscape of Martin.

Poetical images—which are the lights and landscapes of fancy—claim the benefit of these illustrations. There are deep recesses of feeling in the heart of Genius, which seem not less marvellous to the common reader, than the Australian vale was to the traveller. What is unknown is not impossible. Disbelief of things because they are contrary to our experience is fatal to entertainment and truth, both in literature and in morals.

A trifling circumstance occurs to me in Thomson's account of the Dorsetshire Downs, where he speaks of their woody slopes dipping into shadow, the broad patches of corn-land, and enormous flocks scattered over uninhabited tracts of country—these he calls "white. But the epithet was an accommodation of truth to poetical custom; when he composed the *Seasons*, the sheep of Dorset were

usually washed with red ochre. Suppose that he had preserved this local peculiarity, and written :—

> "Pure Dorsetian downs
> The boundless prospect spread, here shagged with woods,
> There rich with harvests, and there *red* with sheep;"

the whole array of town critics would have been in arms, impatient for the assault, yet certain of defeat. The amplest knowledge has the largest faith. Ignorance is always incredulous. Tell an English cottager that the belfries of Swedish churches are crimson, and his own white steeple furnishes him with a contradiction.

(2.) Criticism checks admiration in its excess. Literature has its superstitions and its intolerance. An acute scholar remarked that there is not an anomaly of grammar, or metre, in Milton, which has not been praised as a beauty. Raffaelle is injured by the same idolatry. Look at the miraculous "Draught of Fishes." What a boat! Richardson saw in it only the choice of a lesser evil, and wonderful skill in overcoming it; but Opie has proved that the resources of art might easily have subdued the difficulty without offence to the judgment. What is true of Raffaelle's commentators in one instance, is true of Shakspere's continually; in the eyes of his worshippers the idol is faultless. An ingenious writer compared his poetry to St. Peter's at Rome, and recommended the reader of the drama—like the visitor in the church—when displeased by a spot to take a step further and gaze upon a beauty. The advice is good, if the blemish be not vaunted as a

charm. There ought to be some strong shades between the devotee and the heretic.

We have authors in morocco who would not be recognized by their contemporaries—they are so bedizened with dress, and spangled with flattery. Much of this exaggerated praise may be resolved into self-love. The critic, like the traveller, scrawls his name upon a Pyramid. Jones lives with Cheops; Drake with Shakspere.

It was an observation of Pope, that poets, who are always afraid of envy, have quite as much reason to be alarmed at admiration. He looked upon Shakspere as writing to the people without views of reputation, and having, at his first appearance, no other aim in his writings than to procure a subsistence; or, as he puts the opinion in his poignant verse—

> "Shakspere (whom you and every play-house bill
> Style the divine, the matchless, what you will)
> For gain, not glory, winged his roving flight,
> And grew immortal in his own despite."

Shakspere himself confirms Pope's estimate of his character. He made his fortune, and forgot his plays. Having created a home and a treasure, he threw away the wand. It had done its work in sending him to Stratford. We shall find a profitable moral in Goldsmith's amusing complaint that he was regarded as a partizan, when his only object was to write a book that would sell.

A deep reverence for the Poet may be combined with the liveliest sense of his weakness and false taste. His magnificent images, his loving wisdom, and his noble sentiments, were the beamings of that sun-like mind which shone over the whole world of

nature and fancy; they were inseparably his own. His mock-fights, his artificial thunder, his quibbles and grossness, were chiefly outward accidents of situation and circumstances. They were so many fragments from his festival of imagination and humour, scornfully flung to stay the hunger of the Pit.

Why should Shakspere escape the common lot? Works of Genius must be imperfect. Irregularity is a law of their existence and splendour. Brilliancy, twilight, and shadow, are so many inequalities of surface along a body essentially luminous. Criticism, which does not observe the gloom, is like an imperfect telescope that discovers no spots in the sun. The true observer admits the polemical flatness of *Paradise Lost*, and the overloading sombreness of Rembrandt's "Night-Watch." The low comedy of Damætas and Mopsa displeases his ear in the *Arcadia* of Sidney, and he wishes to shade away the deep lamp-black in the "Transfiguration" of Raffaelle. His love of Spenser does not reconcile his eye to a woodman in Lincoln green during the enchanted reign of Arthur; and he thinks that S. Rosa might have selected a fitter ornament than a cannon for the tent of Holofernes.

Criticism has more dignified duties and nobler pleasures than these. It is the protector of the unfriended, and the avenger of the smitten. Newton found that a star, examined through a glass tarnished by smoke, was diminished into a speck of light. But no smoke ever breathed so thick a mist as envy or detraction. If Milton had come to us in the judgment of Waller, his original brightness would

have sunk into a glimmer. Inferior talents suffer in their degree. Southey spoke of Flecknoe as far from being the despicable scribbler, whom Dryden pelted with such contumely; and Johnson desired to see the collected works of that Dennis, who is beheld by most people bespattered and raving in the pillory of Pope.

We may learn from the poet what perils are encountered by merit. He published his *Essay on Man* without his name. Mallet, a noisy contractor of literary all-work, called at Twickenham soon after its appearance. Pope, who delighted to do everything by stratagem, inquired the news of books. His visitor informed him that the latest publication was something about Man: that he had glanced at it, but detecting the incompetency of the writer, soon tossed it aside. Pope with exquisite cruelty told him the secret.

Pope might sit in his grotto, and amuse himself with inventing new tortures for the purgatory of Dunces: his fame and his fortune were sure. But suppose the author of the *Essay* to have been a genius struggling up the hill—a Chatterton with a Walpole for a patron,—that pert falsehood of Mallet might have overset all his hopes. How often has such a catastrophe befallen the worthiest adventurer! Putting to sea with his first freight, the enemy—in the strong image of Jeremy Collier—has fired the beacons, drawn down the posse at his landing, and charged him while he was staggering on the beach.

In such cases Criticism appears like some goddess in Homeric warfare—awful, yet sweet. Insulted [illegible]ect is crowned after its death; and the eloquent

panegyric is a chamber where the author lies in state. The scorn and the anguish of a life are recompensed by the magnificence of the mourning; while a beautiful colour seems to bathe the sleeper from the overhanging canopy. These funeral rites should be reserved for the princes of learning. Criticism bribed by the affections, by passion, or by interest, sometimes arrays the usurper in the trappings or royalty. Flattery sits at the head with its crown and sceptre; the bier is emblazoned with escutcheons. But rank in literature is neither inherited nor bestowed. If the soul of Genius did not animate the author, his collapsed reputation is only lifted up like the body of Arvalan in Eastern story. The motion comes from the tread of the bearers, as the powerless, bloodless frame sways to and fro with its own ungoverned and corrupting weight.

This Discourse scarcely presumes to speak of Criticism, as it now lives and flourishes. Much, however, of the pleasure of literature arises out of its skilful exercise. If there be in it little of the splenetic heart of a former century, there is abundance of untimely fruit, and confident foreheads. Its defects are twofold,—a want of modesty, and a want of knowledge. A remedy for the former is to be found in the removal of the latter. A silent noviciate of five years would sow the mind. The truest critic, like the deepest philosopher, will produce his opinions as doubts. Only the astrologer and the empyric never fail.

A thoughtful person is struck by the despotic teaching of the modern school. The decisions of

the eighteenth century are reversed, and the authority of the judges is ignored. Addison's chair is filled by Hazlitt; a German mist intercepts Hurd. Our classical writers daily recede further from the public eye. Milton is visited like a monument. The scholarly hand alone brushes the dust from Dryden. The result is unhappy. Critics and readers, by a sort of necessity, refer every production of the mind to a modern standard. The age weighs itself. One dwarf is measured by another. The fanciful lyrist looks tall when Pindar is put out of sight. This is like boarding up Westminster Abbey, and all the cathedrals, and deciding on the merits of a church, by comparing it with the newest Gothic design that, sent too soon to the roadside, implores of every passer-by the charity of a steeple.

XV.—Poetry, its Shapes and Beauties.

Poetry is the first Pleasure of Literature that captivates the eye and the heart. It is the pearl shining in the bosom of the story. Whatever of beautiful, instructive, or alluring, belongs to Philosophy, History, or Fiction, is wrapped up in Poetry. It sets the hardest lessons to music. Epicurus might have rejoiced to send his pupils to Lucretius, and the Roman farmer have found his text-book in the Georgics. Such charms have endeared Poetry.

The Temple of Fame contains no sepulchres so beautified by love as those of the poets. Their memory is bound up with the histories of kings and

nobles. Davenant records, in musical prose, some of the rare achievements of minstrelsy. A tyrant lived with the praise and died with the blessing of Greece, for gathering the dust of Homer into an urn; Thebes was preserved by the harp of Pindar; the elder Scipio lay in the bosom of Ennius; Lælius was flattered by the rumour of his helping Terence; Virgil brightened the purple of an Emperor; and the Capitol shouted for Petrarch.

Poetry deserves the honour it obtains as the eldest offspring of Literature, and the fairest. It is the fruitfulness of many plants growing into one flower, and sowing itself over the world in shapes of beauty and colour, which differ with the soil that receives and the sun that ripens the seed. In Persia, it comes up the rose of Hafiz; in England, the many-blossomed tree of Shakspere.

Poetry is the making of thought. He who finds, creates. The Poet calls shadows into the crystal of memory, as the Charmer, in old times, peopled his glass with faces of the absent. Mirrors of magic may represent the inventions of the minstrel. The Phantasy of the Greeks, the Vision of the Latins, and the Imagination of ourselves, signify the same work of the mind, *the causing to appear.*

Imagination is the union of likenesses, and their exhibition in new forms. It is composed of several conceptions folded into each other. For example —The memory entertains an idea of a palace; Imagination embellishes it with splendid apartments, crowns it with gilded pinnacles, or embosoms it in gardens. The strange animal of the traveller bristles

into the Dragon of Spenser. The Helen of Zeuxis was the blended harmony and bloom of a five-fold loveliness; and the Hercules of Glycon showed the ennobled symmetry of his most athletic contemporaries. Raffaelle and Guido professed to have their model enshrined in one certain Idea of beauty; yet it was not created in the mind. The features of life, in its purest developments, were spiritualized by Imagination. A common face is thrown upon the glass, and the sun brightens it. The smallest seed may contain the flower. The Greek sculptor never saw Jupiter, but he had gazed upon heroes. Milton walked in a garden before he planted Eden.

In this way the most exquisite combinations of the Poet are traced back to their beginnings; whether Milton dazzles us with the flash of unnumbered swords in his dark Consistory; or Virgil brings Minerva shouting to the Greeks in the flames of Troy; or Tasso illuminates the hill-top with the feet of an angel; or Shelley compares life to a dome of glass which

"Stains the white radiance of Eternity;"

in each case the writer had something to work upon. The outline lay in his recollection. The visible led him to the unseen. The conception opened into the image.

If we divide Poetry into Classic and Romantic, the former will be found to delight most the taste and the heart; the latter, the imagination and the senses. A flowing outline of calm dignity marks the Parthenon and *Samson Agonistes*. Broken shadows, *mystery, and awe*, endear an old Gothic house and a

canto of Spenser. The enchanted forest of Tasso casts a dreadfuller shade over the thoughts than the grove of Lucan. Warton supposes a reader to be more impressed by the black plumes on the helmet in *Otranto*, and the gigantic arm on the great staircase, than by any paintings of Ovid or Apuleius.

By whatever name the beautiful in thought may be distinguished—Classic or Gothic, Descriptive or Philosophical—the lover of fancy welcomes it. He drinks at every fountain of taste. In each colour and bend of the wide landscape he discovers something to admire: the cloud-capt battlements and flashing standards of the Epic; the dim mountain heights of the Contemplative; the sunny slope of the Pastoral; or the heaving turf of the Elegist. Whatever is lovely and of good report is within the reach of his sympathy. He turns from the humour of Chaucer to the dreams of Collins; as he feels opposite emotions roused and gratified by the Woodman of Gainsborough, and the Saint of Francia.

In a true Epic, he admires the palace of the Muse. Each book is a state-room full of portraits of princes and heroes. Long lines of historic ancestors and splendid achievements rise to his memory. He reads Homer with some of the sentiment with which he visits Windsor. Reflective poetry exerts its power in a different manner. The palace moulders into the cathedral; tombs replace the ancestral pictures; the cloister is the royal chamber; and Death breathes the kingly consecration of Time.

Gayer scenes sometimes invite him. Sir Hudibras *talks Babylonian*; Gilpin's postchaise takes him up for

Edmonton; Pope introduces a Conversation-piece, sparkling as Watteau's; Thomson leads him among the ripe fruit, and under the warm shade of the garden wall; or if his mood be idler, he gathers a few sonnets, the hedge-flowers of fancy, and dreams over a stanza of Parnell and Shenstone.

The advantages of Poetry are many, as its delights are common. It makes dark weather fair, and blue skies bluer. The dismallest day—a giant of clouds—sinks before it. Not only Shakspere and Milton bear the sling; the fatal pebble may be taken from a village brook. The insolent Philistine, who lords it over a noble spirit, is frequently vanquished and plundered by one of a ruddy countenance, coming from the country and the sheepfold.

It is worth observing how much our out-of-door pleasures are heightened by the poets. Nature,

"By all her blooms and mingled murmurs dear,"

is brought closer to the heart; her charms are doubled. The fields look greener; brighter people walk among the corn. Wordsworth gilds the forest arches with the equipage of Olympus; Spenser touches the mossy roots of old beeches into sunshine with the angel face of Una; Shakspere sprinkles moonbeams to

"Tip with silver all the fruit-tree tops;"

Southey

"Mottles with mazy shade the orchard slope;"

and Bloomfield gathers the white clouds to rest in the evening sky, like a flock of sheep with the shepherd.

Poetry in general resembles a field-path which the whole village may walk upon. Most of its beauties are unenclosed. But here and there a choice tree, or a fine glimpse of scenery, is shut in. Only a learned taste may open the gate and show the grounds. Akenside, Collins, Gray, and T. Warton, are examples of this kind. The principle of their style is twofold; embracing—1. The construction of a language differing from that of society; and 2. The decoration and arrangement of it, according to the laws of design and colour. The first object is sought by blending foreign idioms with those of home; and the second by disposing the thoughts to captivate and dazzle the eye.

It is obvious that the gratification which such productions afford lies beyond the sentiment, or the description, and is independent of either. A Greek or a Latin phrase, suddenly encountered, is like a sketch of a ruin or a costume in a traveller's note-book. It carries the mind back into the scenery and the customs of ancient people. "By these means," it has been elegantly observed, "the genius of the poet, instead of leading, seems only to accompany us into the regions of his beautiful creations, while the activity of the fancy multiplies into a thousand forms the image it has received; and the memory, gathering up the most distant associations, surrounds the poet with a lustre not his own."

These are the enclosed beauties of Poetry—sheltered garden-beds of curious flowers—not to be judged by comparison with the open landscape, but to be visited and enjoyed for their own particular

charms. There can be no uniformity of excellence. Each style of invention—poetic, architectural, artistic, or musical—has its own laws, and demands a trial which shall be based upon them. Marino and Cowley would not call Petrarch and Wordsworth as witnesses to character. Ariosto demurs to a summing up of Quintilian. Julio Romano represents the Hours feeding the Horses of the Sun; Landseer takes his palfrey from the meadow to prance with cavalier or lady, in the green array of the olden time. What then? Have we one measure for the most poetical and the truest of Painters? Must the allegoric and the real be thrown into the same scale?

Look at the argument in another way. Hang Wilkie's "Rent-Day" and a picture of P. Veronese together. We are contrasting an interior in Goldsmith's Auburn with Milton's grandest compositions from Mythology. In one, the elements of interest are few and simple—the old furniture, the weeping woman, the hard broker; nothing speaks to the imagination, or the taste: the appeal is to the heart. In the other, the materials of impression are many and costly—sculptured columns, sumptuous trains of servants, the plume and stateliness of war. The heart is untouched; all strikes the eye, and is addressed to it. Bring the beggar from the street, and he has a pulse and a tear for Wilkie; but call the scholar from his prints and statues, to appreciate the grace and the dignity of Verona. The accomplished reader tries to unite the feelings of sympathy and of taste. He acknowledges each to be a master, [redacted] *admires both if he can.*

Hitherto we have been considering those delights which Poetry supplies to the mind. But it has other attractions. Next to its language is the tone of its voice. It makes love to the ear, and wins it with music. Certain passages possess a beauty altogether unconnected with their meaning. The reader is conscious of a strange, dreamy sense of enjoyment, as of lying upon warm grass in a June evening, while a brook tinkles over stones in the glimmer of trees. Sidney records the effect of the old ballad on himself; and Spence informs us that he never repeated particular lines of delicate modulation without a shiver in his blood, not to be expressed. Boyle was conscious of a tremor at the utterance of two verses in *Lucan;* and Derham knew "one to have a chill about his head," upon reading or hearing the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, and David's lamentation for Jonathan. How deep is the magic of sound may be learned by breaking some sweet verses into prose. The operation has been compared to gathering dew-drops, which shine like jewels upon the flower, but run into water in the hand. The elements remain, but the sparkle is gone.

Of all the measures in which Imagination takes its pastime, the heroic line of Milton and Shakspere is the most rich and changeful. It is full of opportunities. Every colour and shade play on its broken surface. No gleam of sun is lost. Its broad mirror gives space for the magnificence of imagery, and the long-drawn pomp of description; for the snowy *piles of alabaster*, where the chief of the angelic

guard kept watch near the Eastern gate of Eden, his shield and sword "hung high with diamond flaming;" and for the bark of the Egyptian, with its silken sails and painted fans, gliding on its own shadow of gold along the glassy Cydnus.

Milton played on his metre like his organ. He brings out with a daring finger every grand and various note, sometimes—with wonderful effect—striking a momentary crash of discord into the full swell of the music. He disregards syllables. A poet, not unworthy to criticise him, quotes the verses in which Death threatens Satan at the gates of Hell—

> "Back to thy punishment,
> False fugitive! and to thy speed add wings,
> Lest with a whip of scorpions I pursue
> Thy ling'ring—or with one stroke of this dart
> Strange horror seize thee, and pangs unfelt before;"

and remarks, "The hand of a master is felt through every movement of this sentence, especially towards the close, where it seems to grapple with the throat of the reader; the hard, *staccato* stops, that well nigh take the breath, in attempting to pronounce 'or, with one stroke of this dart,' are followed by an explosion of sound in the last line like a heavy discharge of artillery."

Shenstone found his ear always pleased by the introduction of words—like *watery*—which, consisting of two syllables, have the fulness of three. The employment of spondees, with the melody of dactyls, is another secret of Milton's versification. If *Shakspere be studied* with equal attention, the *whole power and* compass of the English language

will be understood. Perhaps it is susceptible of no inflection of harmony, not even the low thrill of the flageolet, which is not brought out in the passionate or familiar tones of its imperial Master.

The rhyming couplet may claim the second rank. Dryden took the tinkle from the chime, by his artful and various pauses. At once majestic and easy, with the warble of the flute and the trumpet-peal, he fills and entrances the ear. The mellifluence of Pope, as Johnson called it, has the defect of monotony. Exquisite in the sweet rising and falling of its clauses, it seldom or never takes the ear prisoner by a musical surprise. If Pope be the nightingale of our verse, he displays none of the irregular and unexpected gush of the songster. He has no variations. The tune is delicate, but not natural. It reminds us of a bird, all over brilliant, which pipes its one lay in a golden cage, and has forgotten the green wood in the luxury of confinement. But Dryden's versification has the freedom and the freshness of the fields. Running through his noblest harmonies, we catch, at intervals, that rude sweetness of a Scottish air which he himself heard in Chaucer. This is a great charm. He preserved the simple, unpremeditated graces of the earlier couplet, its confluence and monosyllabic close, while he added a dignity and a splendour unknown before. Pope's modulation is of the ear; Dryden's of the subject. He has a different tone for Iphigenia slumbering under trees, by the fountain side; for the startled knight, who listens to strange sounds within the glooms of the wood; and for

the courtly Beauty to whom he wafted a compliment.

The stanza, to which Spenser has given a name, combines the advantages of the blank verse with the graces of the rhymed. Dryden confessed his obligations to a concord of sounds for helping him to a thought, and some of the most elaborate delineations of Spenser appear to have grown out of the necessities of his metre. Warton instances the binding of Furor by Guyon :—

"With hundred iron chains he did him bind,
And hundred knots, which did him sore constrain;
Yet his great iron teeth he still did grind,
And grimly gnash, threatening revenge in vain:
His burning eyes, whom bloody streaks did stain,
Stared full wide, and threw forth sparks of fire;
And more for rank despight, than for great pain,
Shakt his long locks coloured like copper wire,
And bit his tawny beard to show his raging ire."

But for the tyranny of rhyme, we might have wanted the vivid circumstances of the fifth, sixth, and eighth lines. The stanza, in Spenser's hand, is equal to any Rembrandt-effect of shadow, or fear. Never did the armour of a knight strike more glittering rays into the dark, or a red thunderbolt tear up the ground with a fiercer plunge, than in his verse. But its nature is gentler and more sunny. Its home is on the lips of love, when May throws flowers from her lap, or with the dreaming Enchantress, whose warm tresses are sprinkled by ambrosia;

"on either hand upswells
The gold-fringed pillow lightly prest."

Then all the hidden melody of its soul comes forth. *Listen to the description* of the abode of Sleep :—

"And more to lull him in his slumbers soft,
A trickling stream from high rocks tumbling downe,
And ever-drizzling rain upon the loft,
Mixed with a murmuring wind much like the sowne
Of swarming bees, did cast him in a swowne:
No other noise, nor people's troublous cries
As still are wont t' annoy the walléd towne,
Might there be heard; but careless Quiet lies,
Wrapt in eternal silence, far from enemies."

A writer, who has thrown many pleasant lights upon poetry, reminds us that in reading this stanza we ought to humour it with a corresponding tone of voice, lowering or deepening it, "as though we were going to bed ourselves, or thinking of the rainy night that had lullèd us." He suggests that attention to the accent and pause in the last line will make us feel the depth and distance of the scene. This sense of remote loneliness forms a delightful peculiarity of Spenser at all seasons. A thousand miles of dark trees seem to rustle between the world and the poet. Mr. Coleridge points out the imaginative absence of space and time in the *Faëry Queen*. The haunted region has no boundary—the reader goes with the poet, as the Waking Beauty followed the conquering Prince:—

"Across the hills and far away
Beyond their utmost purple rim,
And deep into the dying day."

His eyes are in a trance, delicious as that which held the maid, the page, and the peacock, when a sudden breeze swept through the garden, and all the clocks of that marvellous house struck together. He is in Dreamland, without the wish or the power to ask, or to learn, how he came, or when he is to depart. If a faint murmur from the dim world of

life break on the calm, some sweet symphony of the silver-sounding instruments soon renews the spell—

> "A most melodious sound
> Of all that might delight a dainty ear,
> Such as, at once, might not on living ground,
> Save in this paradise, be heard elsewhere."

The picturesque of versification shares the inconveniences of the picturesque in building; dark windows and winding galleries perplex the footstep; obscure similes and intricate epithets entangle the attention. The defects of the Spenserian stanza are classed under three heads: (1.) Dilation of circumstances, however insignificant; (2.) Repetition of words; (3.) The introduction of puerile or unbecoming thoughts to complete the rhyme. For the most part the skill of the poet overcomes the difficulties. His nimble hand ranges over the keys and brings the harshest notes into concord. Occasionally, however, lines are rebellious. A stanza turns upon him, but he encounters it with a resolution which reminded an ingenious critic, of Hercules breaking the back of the Nemean lion. He dislocates the tender nerves of a metaphor with a merciless grasp; alters, lengthens, or cuts away words and letters. Language is his kingdom, and he rules it like a despot.

After every abatement, the stanza itself remains unequalled for breadth, richness, and sound. It is marked, moreover, by a romantic wildness, which is singularly appropriate to the visionary temper of the poem. The lingering, dying fall of the closing Alexandrine suits well the antique style, and the

serious light of the verse. As the music rolls down the shadowy canto, which the cloud of allegory and the beams of fancy fill with a balmy twilight, we recall to our memory the anthem in a gorgeous chapel, when it sweeps along the branching roof, and trembles round the decorated pinnacles, and sighs among the glimmering stone-work and the fading canopies, until every pillar and leaf are

"Kissed
By sound, or ghost of sound, in mazy strife."

It would be like reckoning up the notes of the wood in spring, to dwell upon the pleasures afforded to the ear by that linked sweetness, which gives the title of "lyrical" to the dancing numbers of Cowley, and the buoyant Masques of Milton and Jonson; while the laboured efforts of their genius are honoured and surveyed, the gayer language of fancy is ever on the tongue. *Paradise Lost* is laid up in cedar; but *L'Allegro* is a household word.

It was a saying of Shenstone, and experience confirms it, that the lines of poetry, the periods of prose, and even the texts of Scripture most frequently recollected and quoted, are those which are felt to be pre-eminently musical. The simplest rhythm is the softest, and the most familiar is the dearest. New forms disturb the ear by disappointing it. Perhaps the innovations of Horace may help to explain the neglect of him which the discoveries of Pompeii suggest. Collins has not rendered the unrhymed ode popular. Southey pays in reputation for the difficulty of his tunes. Whatever changes be rung upon bells, they ought to be chimes. The com-

positions, to which we return with affectionate frequency, owe their interest to the cadence scarcely less than to their imagery. Take the following specimen, which has the warble and the pathos of the nightingale:—

YOUTH AND AGE.

"Flowers are lovely; Love is flower-like;
Friendship is a sheltering tree;
Oh, the joys that came down shower-like,
Of Friendship, Love, and Liberty,
Ere I was old!
Ere I was old! Ah, woeful Ere!
Which tells me, Youth's no longer here!
O Youth! for years so many and sweet,
'Tis known that thou and I were one;
I'll think it but a fond conceit—
It cannot be that Thou art gone!
The vesper bell hath not yet tolled,
And thou wert aye a masker bold!
What strange disguise hast now put on,
To make believe that thou art gone?
I see these locks in silvery slips,
This drooping gait, this altered size:
But spring-tide blossoms on thy lips,
And tears take sunshine from thine eyes.
Life is but thought; so think I will,
That Youth and I are house-mates still."

XVI.—SATIRE EXCLUDED FROM POETRY.

THE Satirist is only related to the Poet when he beautifies the exhibition of real life with the lights of fancy, and ennobles invective into allegory; when he puts the crown upon some martyr of Learning, or immortalizes a moral malefactor in fire. But as the mere outburst of passion, disappointment, or rivalry, Satire is banished from the family of Song. Literature loves the good-will and peace she teaches.

Quarrels in verse or in prose, never gain her protection. The abuse of Churchill melts with the winter snow. Even the mightiest word-combatants draw few eyes to the story of their struggles; and the fierce controversy of Milton has left no deeper traces behind it, than the feet of a Greek wrestler upon the dust of the arena.

Viewed in its happiest form, as a work of art, Satire has one defect which seems to be incurable—*its uniformity of censure.* Bitterness scarcely admits those fine transitions, which make the harmony of a composition. *Aquafortis* bites a plate all over alike. The satirist is met by the difficulty of the etcher. But he wants his opportunities of conquering it. The graver may lend emphasis to the needle. The angry pen has no ally. The necessary balance of effect can only be given by a different hand. A satire should be interpolated by a philosopher, and the gnomic wisdom of Jackson be stamped upon Pope.

XVII.—The Drama, its Character and Entertainment.

Dryden defined a play to be a just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humours, and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind. Hurd expands the view. Man is so constructed, that whatever his condition may be—whether pleasurable or painful—the imagination continually presents to the mind numberless varieties of pictures

conformable to his situation. These images are shaped and tinged by the circumstances of birth, feeling, and employment. The exhibition of them is the Poetry, and a just representation is the Art of dramatic writing. Supposing this outline to be earnestly filled up, the Stage would become a school of virtue, and Tragedy, in the words of Percy, be a supplement to the Pulpit.

And this, according to his light, was the character of the Greek dramatist. He instructed and entertained. His page was solemnized by wisdom. It was such a style that Milton included among the evening amusements of his Thoughtful Man:

> "Sometimes let gorgeous Tragedy
> In sceptred pall come sweeping by,
> Presenting Thebes or Pelops' line,
> Or the tale of Troy divine;
> Or what—though rare—of later age
> *Ennobled hath the buskin'd stage.*"

The choice of subject, not more than its treatment, gave an educational tone to old Tragedy. The writer selected the grandest features of national story. It is found that a spectator is affected by the rank and remoteness of the sufferer. Belisarius asking an obolus is more touching than a blind sailor who lost his sight before the mast. Hurd puts this feeling with force: "The fall of a cottage by the accidents of time and weather is almost unheeded, whilst the ruins of a tower, which the neighbourhood hath gazed at for ages with admiration, strike all observers with concern." And our own Shakspere never charms us with so mighty a wand, as in his *portraits from* history—

"When mid his bold design,
Before the Scot, afflicted and aghast,
The shadowy kings of Banquo's fated line
Through the dark cave in gleamy pageant passed."

The Drama is the book of the people. In all countries the circumstances of a life, however rudely displayed, possess an incomparable attraction. The story-teller is the play-wright of Constantinople. The adventures of an ancient Javanese prince will hold a native assembly from evening until daylight. Yet the properties consist only of a transparent screen, with a large lamp behind it, and a hundred painted puppets, twelve inches high, cut out of buffalo-hide. The poetry is a monotonous recitative, and the action is confined to throwing the shadow of each successive figure upon the curtain.

A dramatic poet wields the sceptre of the masses; he reaches the national heart through all its organs of sensation. Eye and ear are his ministers. A brave exploit is riveted in the audience. A fine saying grows into an argument. When a moral purpose animates the author, he works it through the play. The commonest burlesque submits to the oversight of conscience.

The Drama embraces and applies all the beauties and decorations of Poetry. The sister arts attend and adorn it. Spenser's lovely portraiture of Venus finding Diana in the wood—

"While all her nymphs did, like a garland, her enclose,"

is vividly descriptive of the honours and services which are rendered to the Muse of Tragedy. Painting, Architecture, and Music, are her handmaids. The costliest lights of a people's intellect

burn at her Show. All ages welcome her. An eloquent admirer has indicated this universal influence. He points to the king, the statesman, and the soldier, gathered before her to watch the anatomy of the passions; to the artist, combining the splendour of costume and variety of characters into gorgeous processions of his own; to the old, living over early days in recollection; and to the young, waiting with eager eyes and beating hearts for the first rustle of the curtain, which is to discover, after each rising fold, a new world of scenery, magnificence, and life.

The Preacher tells us that laughter is mad, and the Proverb of the Wise Man adds a warning that the end of mirth is heaviness. There was a deep moral in the Athenian law which interdicted a judge of the Areopagus from writing a comedy. The habit of looking at things on the ludicrous side is always hurtful to the moral feelings. The pleasure is faint and vanishing, and leaves behind it an apprehension of disgrace. Raffaelle and Hogarth, *Comus* and the *Tale of a Tub*, are cut asunder by a broad gulf. "It is not good to live in jest, since we must die in earnest."

No other element of literature is so susceptible and volatile as Wit. It comes in and goes out with the moon; when most flourishing, it has its boundaries, from which, as Swift said, it may not wander, upon peril of being lost. This geographical chain has bound, with heavier or slighter links, the pleasantry of Lucian, the buffoonery of Rabelais, the pictures of Dryden, and the caricatures of Butler,

The urbane gaiety of Horace alone preserves its freedom, and travels over the world.

Humour, which is the pensiveness of Wit, enjoys a longer and a wider life. After one brilliant explosion, the repartee is worthless. The shrunken firework offends the eye; but the quiet suggestiveness of Mr. Shandy is interesting as ever; and the details of the great army in Flanders will last as long as the passage of Hannibal. Collins seems to indicate the poetical expression of Humour, as distinguished from the broader and coarser mirth:—

"But who is he whom now she views,
In robe of wild contending hues?
Thou by the Passions nursed, I greet
The comic sock that binds thy feet!
O Humour, thou whose name is known
To Britain's favoured isle alone;
Me, too, amidst thy band admit;
There where the young-eyed healthful Wit,
(Whose jewels in his crisped hair
Are placed each other's beams to share;
Whom no delights from thee divide)
In laughter loosed, attends thy side."

The pleasure of Shakspere's comedies rises from their Humour. His smile is serious. Johnson commended tragi-comedy, as giving a true reflection of those grave and trifling incidents which compose the scenes of experience. Joy and grief are never far apart. In the same street the shutters of one house are closed, while the curtains of the next are brushed by shadows of the dance. A wedding-party returns from church, and a funeral winds to its door. The smiles and the sadnesses of life are the tragi-comedy of Shakspere. Gladness and sighs brighten and dim the mirror he beholds. In this respect he differs from his contemporary, Ben

Jonson, in whom is enjoyed, in its richness, the comedy of erudition. The *Alchemist*, the *Silent Woman*, and *Every Man in his Humour*, are masterpieces of a learned pencil. Fletcher may be relished in his *Elder Brother*, and Massinger in his incomparable Sir Giles Overreach.

If the reader descends from the reigns of Elizabeth and James into the time of the second Charles, his gratifications of mirth are purchased by a wounded conscience. Comedy has no whole place in its body. Greek farce was riotous and insolent; yet fancy—like a summer breeze from a green farm—sometimes refreshes the hot stage. Aristophanes paints town-life with a suburb of gardens. But a blade of grass never grew in the theatre of Farquhar and his kindred. Wide was their scholarship in wit:—

> "They sauntered Europe round,
> And gathered every vice on Christian ground."

They cast nets over the old world and the new. No venomous epigram, or sparkling idiom of sin, escaped the throw. Every line glitters and stings. Upon the whole, the pleasures of the drama—tragic and comic—are larger than its advantages. In the bold figure of Cowley, it must be washed in the Jordan to recover its health. A deep purpose of religion alone can make it useful to the people. Taste may purify it, but the disease continues. It is only the water of Damascus to the leper. Of English poets belonging to our golden age, Shakspere has the fewest scales. His vigour of constitution threw off the ranker disease. With Fletcher's

vice and Decker's coarseness, he would have been the fearfullest spectacle the world has beheld of Genius retaining its power, and bereft of its light; and the Temple of our Poetry, bowed by his sacrilegious arms, might have remained a monument of supernatural strength, and sightless despair.

XVIII.—The Delights and Consolations of Poetry.

Neither poet nor reader may reckon on the good fortune of Metastasio, who gained a suit at Naples by some extempore stanzas. A friend invited the judge to her house, the poet pleaded in rhyme, and in two or three days the Court decided in his favour. Future invaders of India will scarcely imitate Alexander, walking—in the lively extravagance of Davenant—after the drum from Macedon, with Homer in his pocket; and Utopia must be erected among the Affghans, before a captive regains his freedom by a few verses of an English Euripides.

Poetry is its own reward. A consoler in life, it soothes afflictions; crowns poverty; rocks asleep sickness; multiplies and refines pleasures; endears loneliness; embellishes the common, and irradiates the lovely. It is the natural religion of Literature. Lord Bacon explained the old superstition that a rainbow draws perfume from the ground it hangs over, by supposing it to absorb the bloom of flowers. The dream of science is a reality of song. That

Bow, which Fancy sets in the clouds of life, drinks fragrance from all its many-coloured joys and sorrows. The hues which it gathers, it restores with milder beauty. The barrenest way-side of want and mourning looks green and cheerful under its brooding line of shadow.

Poetical taste is the only magician whose wand is not broken. No hand, except its own, can dissolve the fabric of beauty in which it dwells. Genii, unknown to Arabian fable, wait at the portal. Whatever is most precious from the loom, or the mine of fancy, is poured at its feet. Love, purified by contemplation, visits and cheers it. Unseen musicians are heard in the dark. It is Psyche in the palace of Cupid.

True Poetry, sincerely cherished, is a friend for life. It accompanies us to all lands, and enjoys health in every climate. Milton disembarks with the Missionary in the Bay of Islands. The African waggon is a litter for Horace. He who loves Imagination and Pathos wears a ring upon his finger, not less precious than that which Pliny tells us belonged to Pyrrhus, in which Nature had produced the figure of Apollo and the nine Muses. The stone answers the wish. Some happy messenger

"Of many a coloured plume sprinkled with gold"

comes to our call. The scene is changed. The street of a great city slopes into a glade of Arcadia; an Italian moon hangs large and glorious between the mountain pines; the shops brighten into gay pavilions, and the trumpet of the tournament rings out its challenge; a magnificent kingdom of the

East flashes through the smoke with all its pinnacles; or a Tyrian sail catches the evening light, and swells softly in the still air of time.

What harmony and lustre such visions shed over the tumult and fever of our cares! And he who seeks, finds them:—

> "In spite of all,
> Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
> From our dark spirits."

The history of a great statesman exemplifies the poetical enchantment. Pitt sometimes escaped from the roar of contending parties at home and abroad, into the solemn retirements of a favourite author. He left the political elements to fight outside, and barred the gates of Imagination upon the storm. One visitor found him reading Milton aloud, with strong emphasis, and so deeply engaged in Paradise, as to have forgotten the presence of any people in the world except Adam and Eve. Compare with this happy portrait the confession of Sir Robert Walpole to Mr. Fox, in the library at Houghton—"I wish I took as much delight in reading as you do: it would be the means of alleviating many tedious hours in my present retirement; but, to my misfortune, I derive no pleasure from such pursuits."

Of course the finest taste has the richest enjoyment, and catches in, in all its dewy lustre,

> "The landscape gliding swift
> Athwart Imagination's vivid eye."

But in whatever degree the poetical feeling may have been cultivated, the reward and the pleasure will be insured. The Muse's stone has a homely

magic. The humblest appeal is never rejected. The farmer, who has treasured a few lines of rural description, may bind the sheaves upon his bed of sickness; the rose and the woodbine will trail their clusters down the wall, and the broken light through the curtains be changed into the tremulous glimmer of elms on the village-green. Even the old squire, no longer startling the woods with his horn, may enjoy a quiet chase in metre, clear a hedge upon a swift hexameter, and in pursuit of the "brush," which was the pride and crown of his manhood,—

"Still scour the county in his elbow-chair."

How, in all times, have the Muse's enchantments been worked! O Queen of Wonders, what tears hast thou dried! What spirits hast thou sent to the gifted in their sorrows, touching the mourner with a silver wand, and wafting him into Elysium! We think of Milton, after the sight of his eyes had gone from him, when the rays of early studies shone across his path; when the voices he loved in youth —solemn notes of tragic, or livelier numbers of lyric verse—stole into his ear out of the gloom; and nightingales sang as sweetly in Cripplegate, as when the April leaf trembled in his father's garden.

We remember Camoens in all his trials; whether gazing on land and water from that rocky chair built by Nature for him—and still called by his name—upon an isthmus of the China seas; shipwrecked, with his *Lusiad* held above the waves, and drifting upon a plank to shore; in Lisbon, waiting in solitude and darkness the return of a black servant, who helped to feed his hunger with the alms

he begged; or closing his eyes—a sick mendicant and outcast—in a public hospital.

We follow Dante, homeless and destitute, with a sentence of flames hanging over his head; a wanderer from city to city in search of rest, having no companion of his trials except the seven cantos of his poem, which he had written before his banishment from Florence; finding in it his consolation, and ever adding a stone to the fabric, as the storm that beat on him through life cleared away into short intervals of sunshine. We weep with Tasso, in the Hospital of St. Anna, scared by the screams of maniacs in the neighbouring cells, yet sometimes turning his thoughts to the correction of his Eastern Story, and peopling the loneliness with the magnificent tumult of a Crusade.

What upheld the buffeted Pilgrims of Fame in their struggle and journey? Doubtless they felt, in all its fever, that passion for renown which the noblest of the four called—

> "The spur which the clear spirit doth raise,
> To scorn delight, and live laborious days."

But they had other and nearer joys. An animating, mastering sense of music lived in their hearts, finding utterance in tones more lulling than the south-west wind of the Arcadia, which, in the ear of Sidney, crept "over flowery fields and shadowed waters in the heat of summer." Happy eyes that make pictures when they are shut! The fragrant shades of a visionary world enclosed their melody, as thick leaves bury the singing birds when *lightnings* are abroad. However wintry the path

might be, they knew of sunny banks and gardens, where the violets were always blowing, and lutes being touched by radiant fingers.

They were conscious of the Muse's presence in sudden streams of bloom and lustre upon the air. Even the strokes of hatred and persecution lost their power, or dropped with a blunted edge. For Homer's Goddess, warding off the dart from her favourite, is ever an allegory of the Poet on the battle-field of the world, where Beauty—his mind's mother—throws forward her bright garment, and intercepts the arrow from the enemy's bow.

And thus it happens that the poet, rich in his poverty, carries with him sweet grapes to quench his thirst, and greenest branches to shelter his repose. The stormy day is better for him than the calm. We are told by Naturalists that birds of Paradise fly best against the wind; it drifts behind them the gorgeous train of feathers, which only entangles their flight with the gale. Pure Imagination, of which the loveliest of winged creatures is the fitting emblem, seems always to gain in vigour and grace by the tempests it encounters, and in contrary winds to show the brightest plumage.

It is a happy feature of English teaching that the child is fed so largely with poetical fruit. A love of the good and the beautiful is thus entwined with the growing mind, and becomes a part of it. Sometimes the muscular ivy does not clasp the oak with a stronger embrace. A remembered verse is pleasing for *its own sake*, and for the associations which it revives. When Sir Joshua Reynolds, with other English

visitors to the Opera in Venice, heard a ballad which was played in every street of London before they left it, the tears rushed to their eyes, and home, with all its endearments and friends, rose before them.

> "Such is the secret union, when we feel
> A song—a flower—a name—at once restore
> The attention."

Most affectingly has a living historian expressed the feeling of unnumbered hearts;—"They who have known what it is when afar from books, in solitude, or in travelling, or in intervals of worldly care, to feed on poetical recollections, to recall the sentiments and images which retain by association the charm that early years once gave them—they will feel the inestimable value of committing to the memory, in the prime of its power, what it will easily receive and indelibly retain."

Nor if the gathering of flowers sometimes awake an ambition to grow them—if the reader, smitten with love of an ode, set himself to produce one—is the injury to his own mind, or the inconvenience to his friends, likely to be of particular moment. He may mistake his calling and his powers—may believe himself born to write, instead of to judge; but next to excellence is the desire of it. A poem that bloomed through the little day of domestic reputation, often blends itself healthfully with the atmosphere of home; as the rose, after its leaves are strewed on the ground, mingles its odours with the air, and continues a purifying work when its colour has departed.

Poetry is born to be the companion of youth.

Those hours may be fleeting as they are fair. The flower of the grass is not withered sooner. Temptations and cares overleap the garden. A blazing sword appears at the gate. The hard paths of toil are to be trodden; the soil of life is to be tilled. But why should Manhood and Poetry no longer take sweet counsel together, and walk through the world as friends? Age, with its bereavements and compensations, will endear them more and more to each other. Do not take away a companion that dries the tear, and a voice that sings in the night. Whatever ills befall them by the way, let Youth and Fancy go out of Paradise hand-in-hand.

XIX.—Fiction: The Romance and the Novel.

A POEM, unfettered by metre and rhythm, takes the name of Romance. The genealogy of fiction furnishes another proof of the diffusion of mental pleasures. The same stories appear with an altered complexion. The cat of Whittington made the fortune of a merchant of Genoa, as well as of a lord mayor of London. Llywellin's greyhound has a second grave very distant from that of Bethgelert. It sleeps and points a moral in Persia. Dear Red Riding Hood puts off her cloak by a Danish fireside. The dart of Abaris, which carried the philosopher whithersoever he desired it, gratifies later enthusiasts *in travel, as the* Cap of Fortunatus and the space-*compelling boots* of the nursery hero. The helmet

of Pluto, which protected Perseus in his desperate combat with Medusa, has frequently shielded humbler heads as the Fog-cap of the north; while the ring of Gyges transferred its advantages of secresy to the mask of Arthur.

For practical purposes, Prose-fiction may be divided into two kinds: (1) the Romance, which is the legend of heroic; and (2) the Novel, which is the news of common life. The Romance flourishes in the ignorance, the Novel in the refinement of a nation. The fourteenth century asked for exploits of Charlemagne; the nineteenth, how the Duke of Fair-light dines. The same feeling may still be traced in the contrasts of barbarism and civilization. The wild Arab by his watch-fire, listens out the night to the music of spears in the fierce foray; the Japanese gentleman, mooring his splendid boat under a tree, hears his fashionable tale from the story-teller, who collects the gossip of his neighbourhood.

With ourselves Fiction is only one of the countless pleasures by which curiosity is amused. But to remoter students it presented the collected charms of literature. We can hardly realize the fascinations of Romance in ages, when ability to read a book was a rarer accomplishment than the writing of it would be at present. A Gothic story, before the press vulgarized wonders, was a treasure to be catalogued with the statutes of the realm. The will of a Scottish baronet, in 1390, includes both in the same bequest. Such a book was the pride of the eyes:

"*Princes* and kings received the wondrous gift,
And ladies read the work they could not lift."

The scribe, the artist, and the binder, lavished their time and skill. Six years were not unfrequently spent upon the internal decorations. The margin, in the place of canvas, was enriched with portraits, magnificent dresses, flowers, and fruits. Letters of silver shone on a purple ground. Golden roses studded a covering of crimson velvet; and clasps of precious metal, richly chased, shut up the adventurous knights and the radiant damsels in their splendid home. Wonderful were the doings within! Crabbe has playfully unfolded some of them in harmonious verse:—

> "Hark! hollow blasts through empty courts resound,
> And shadowy forms with staring eyes stalk round;
> See! moats and bridges, walls and castles rise,
> Ghosts, fairies, demons, dance before our eyes;
> Lo! magic verse inscribed on golden gate,
> And bloody hand that beckons on to fate.
> 'And who art thou, thou little page unfold?
> Say, doth thy lord my Claribel withhold?
> Go, tell him straight—Sir Knight, thou must resign
> The captive Queen: for Claribel is mine.'
> Away he flies; and now for bloody deeds,
> Black suits of armour, masks, and foaming steeds;
> The Giant falls; his recreant throat I seize,
> And from his corslet take the massy keys."

The Knight and Lady of high degree did not keep these worthies to themselves. Over their ample pages, poetical eyes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries pored with untiring satisfaction. Southey discovered in the *Amadis of Gaul* the Zelmane of the *Arcadia*, the Masque of Cupid of the *Faëry Queen*, and the Florizel of the *Winter's Tale*.

The Romance of chivalry replaced the Heroic in a reduced and feeble copy. It was the incredible

in water-colours. We miss the giants and the enchanters with their enormous capacities. Things that never could be done, are, indeed, accomplished in every page; but the actors look diminutive and tame. They want the dauntless vivacity of their predecessors. The epic of falsehood was closed.

Years passed by, and Fiction put on another shape, and received the name, without the inheritance, of Minerva. Mediæval exaggerations were clothed in modern dresses. Giants, living in impregnable castles, gave way to heroes of præternatural stature in their sentiments, who raved through four volumes—sometimes five—for dark ladies of impossible beauty. What a geography was theirs! Puck found himself out-run. The chronicler of the sayings and doings of the Black Penitents put a girdle round the world, in considerably less than forty minutes. Time and space were mere circumstances. Kingdoms fraternized. Constantinople abutted on Moorfields; and Julius Cæsar conquered Mexico with Cortes. Probability was despised. Everything came to pass when it was wanted; and the healthiest people died the moment they were in the way.

The incidents of these tales resembled drop-curtains in small theatres. The effect was terrible. The Vicar's daughter, watching a fine sunset from the churchyard, was ruthlessly carried off by banditti, who stepped out of a Salvator on purpose. Perhaps the scene was laid in a mountain-country, and then, about the middle of the first volume, a sentimental *youth was* entranced, during a moonlight walk, by

unearthly strains of music proceeding from a lady in white muslin, who stood with her harp upon a pinnacle of frozen snow, where the wild goat, in these prosaic days, would not find a footing. These extravagances melted before the dazzling creations of Scott, and a fourth class of Fiction delighted the world.

I am not competent to speak of later styles and performances, and will not venture to say whether the irony of Cowper be applicable to our own days:—

> "And novels—witness every month's Review,—
> Belie their name, and offer nothing new."

But the hastiest observer cannot fail to mark that in gay, as in graver efforts, our century is the era of revised editions. Richardson, Smollett, and their contemporaries, come out in clever abridgments, adapted to the changes of taste, and under various titles. Old friends revisit us with new faces. Amelia has watched the dying embers for a dozen husbands, since Fielding left her; and Uncle Toby's mellow tones have startled us down a college staircase, and through the railings of counting-houses in the City. Gentlemen and heroines from whom we parted many years ago, with slight respect for their attainments and morals, have now taken a scientific, or a serious turn. Lovelace is absorbed in entomology; and Lady Bellaston is a rubber of brasses.

In considering the objects of Prose fiction, I am led to think it most useful, as it is most poetical. The grandest outlines of character afford the healthfullest examples. On this account, heroic and chi-

valrous legends have peculiar advantages. Their colossal virtues are links between the human and a higher organization. They show a sort of middle life. Imagination presenting to the mind ideal forms of beauty and courage, is a faint shadow of Faith, by which the unseen things of another existence are brought in later years before us. An ennobling element of thought is wanted; and a reflective observer predicted a deficiency of generous, brave, and devout feelings in the manhood of a person, in whose youth he discovered a severe restriction of the mind to bare truth and minute accuracy, with dislike of the fanciful, the tender, and the magnificent. Johnson seems to have held the same opinion. Writing to Mrs. Thrale about the education of her daughter, he said:—"She will go back to her arithmetic again,—a science suited to Sophy's cast of mind; for you told me in the last winter that she loved metaphysics more than romances. Her choice is certainly laudable, as it is uncommon; but *I would have her like what is good in both.*" If life be a curious web, which each man and woman are obliged to weave, why should not a thread of gold run through the woof? There is a better quality even than prudence. We meet people every day who think themselves wise because they are selfish. Cut a leaf from a ledger, and you have their life.

The importance of the Romantic element does not rest upon conjecture. Pleasing testimonies abound. Hannah More traced her earliest impressions of virtue to works of fiction; and Adam Clarke gives a list of tales that won his boyish admiration.

Books of entertainment led him to believe in a spiritual world; and he felt sure of having been a coward, but for romances. He declared that he had learned more of his duty to God, his neighbour, and himself, from *Robinson Crusoe*, than from all the books—except the Bible—that were known to his youth. These grateful recollections never forsook him, and the story of De Foe was put into the hands of his children as soon as they were able to read it. Sir Alexander Ball informed Coleridge that he was drawn to the Navy, in childhood, by the pictures which this Ancient Mariner left on his mind.

It would be an idle endeavour to answer all the objections which have been urged against Fiction. But on one of the perils most earnestly deprecated —the disregard of harmony between the means and the end—a few remarks may be offered. Let me take the objector's own case, and put it in stronger colours, after this manner. A young man is in love with a lady of higher station, who is not blind to his merits; but her parents talk of settlements, and he has nothing but hope. How is the difficulty to be overcome? In the easiest way. Twenty years ago, a gentleman came to London from the New Forest, rejected and desperate. All his affections were shattered. With one wrench he cast off his country and his attachment together. He sails to India; works hard; gets promoted; and comes home with two hundred thousand pounds and a portfolio of tigers. What has he to do with the story? Everything. This fortunate adventurer

is the lover's uncle, although nobody knew of the relationship. Well; he has landed at Portsmouth, and is riding leisurely by a dark wood to look at a house which is to let, with a small portmanteau strapped on his horse. This is the moment. Three footpads spring from the trees; robbery and murder seem inevitable, when his nephew—the young man who could not get married, and who had been reading Hammond's Elegies on a stile—rushes to the rescue. The plunderers disappear; the kinsmen recognize each other; the brave defender receives on the spot a cheque for ten thousand pounds, and departs by the night-coach to tell the news to Cecilia. Of course, every difficulty vanishes; the marriage is solemnized, and the last chapter ends in a peal.

Now, suppose this adventure, in all its absurdity, to be really written and read, who is likely to be injured by it? Is it worth a moralist's trouble to work himself into a frenzy, and say that his "indignation is excited at the immoral tendency of such lessons to young readers, who are thus taught to undervalue and reject all sober, regular plans for compassing an object, and to muse on improbabilities, till they become foolish enough to expect them?"

In the first place, it may be denied that one young man in a million ever built his hopes of prosperity or love, upon recollections of visionary relatives in Benares. Even real uncles are forgotten when they never return. And, secondly, it is not to be assumed that the remote contingencies of life ought to be always rejected as hurtful. Good

fortune is an useful delusion. The improbabilities of experience are many, the impossibilities are few. The rich kinsman may not arrive from India to make two hearts happy; but circumstances do fall out in a way altogether contrary to expectation; helping friends rise up quite as strangely as apparitions of Nabobs from the jungle; and the dearest chains of affection are sometimes riveted by means scarcely less astonishing, and certainly not more anticipated, than the magical cheque of the dreamer. Instead, therefore, of starting from a romantic danger, I am inclined, under proper limitations, to welcome a moral advantage. It is something to keep the spirits up in so long and harassing a journey; and even the pack-horse goes better with his bells.

This conclusion invites me to remember another pleasure which Prose Fiction shares with Poetic, in withdrawing its readers, for a while, from the discomforts of their condition. It pours sunlight on the dingiest window, and sows a hedge of roses round a ruinous dwelling. Sterne justly commended it for cheating fear and sorrow of many weary moments, and leading the traveller from the hard road to stray upon enchanted ground. Naturally, the writer himself feels the liveliest power of the spell. Rousseau wrote the letters of Julia on small sheets of paper, which he folded and read in his walks, with as much rapture as if they had been sent to him by the post; and Richardson wept for Clementina, as *for a real sufferer.* The reader enjoys the same *enchantment* according to his sensibility. Petrarch

was so affected by Boccaccio's story of Griseldis, that he wished, as he assured his friend, to get it by heart; and he mentions a scholar who, having undertaken to read it to a company, was interrupted by his tears.

If we look into biography, we find that the most refined and the strongest thinkers—the theologian, the poet, and the metaphysician—have turned a kind eye upon Fiction, which has beguiled the leisure and refreshed the toils of Gray and Warburton, of Locke and Crabbe.

One advantage of this kind of literature deserves to be specified with particular earnestness. It gives instruction in amusement. Addison acknowledged that he would rather inform than divert his reader; but he recollected that a man must be familiar with wisdom before he willingly enters on Seneca and Epictetus. Fiction allures him to the severe task by a gayer preface. Embellished truths are the illuminated alphabet of larger children. "We endure reproofs from our friends in leather jackets," remarked a scholar to the lively lady of Streatham, "which we should never support if pronounced by our contemporaries in lace and tissue."

Fiction, like the drama, speaks to our hearts by exhibitions. Mr. Allworthy was acting a sermon upon charity, when the gentle pressure of the strange infant's hand on one of his fingers—seeming to implore assistance—outpleaded, in a moment, the indignant proposal of Mrs. Deborah to put it in a warm basket—as the night was rainy—and lay it at the Churchwarden's door; Corporal Trim's illustra-

tion of death, by the falling hat in the kitchen, strikes the fancy more than a climax of Sherlock; and the Vicar of Wakefield in the prison is a whole library of theology made vocal.

In exact proportion to the facility and the vividness of the lesson, must be the oversight of its character. Richardson never sustained so heavy a blow as one of the least susceptible of essayists inflicted, when reading *Pamela* on the grass of Primrose Hill, and being joined by a friendly damsel, who desired to read in company, he confessed, "I could have wished it had been any other book." However ingeniously the highly-coloured scenes of the classic novelists may be defended, the sober judgment will never be convinced. To say that they conduct the history to its catastrophe, and have their sting drawn by the moral, is like telling us to live tranquilly over a cellar of combustibles, because an engine with abundance of water is at the end of the street.

Sir Walter Scott regarded the vices and follies of Fielding's celebrated hero as those which the world soon teaches to all, and to which society is accustomed to show so much forbearance. But it has been well observed, that he neglected to estimate the extent to which that false indulgence may be the effect of an immoral literature, operating through a long course of years upon the individual minds of which society is composed. Men are quickly acclimatized in sin; and the eye, familiar with disease, is not offended by a few spots on the page.

During the early popularity of Smollett and Fielding, Johnson contributed some wise suggestions

respecting the employment of Fiction. He advised the novelist to display virtue in its ideal beauty, not angelical, or improbable—because we only imitate what we believe—but the purest and the noblest within our reach. This selected character he wished to be carried through the various changes and trials of life, in order that by its victories and its patience —by the afflictions it vanquished or endured—we may be taught what to hope and what to perform. His concluding sentence is fatal to the greatest names in the art:—"Vice should always disgust; nor should the graces of gaiety, or the dignity of courage, be so united with it as to reconcile it to the mind. Whenever it appears it should raise hatred by the malignity of its practices, and the meanness of its stratagems; for while it is supported by parts or spirit, it will be seldom heartily abhorred."

Such are some of the pleasures and advantages of Fiction. As the Romance, its object is to raise the mind by proposing to it for imitation characters of purity, courage, and patience; as the Novel, its work is to check and amend the little weaknesses of temper, by humbling reflections of them upon the mirror of the tale. When Fiction fulfils one or other of these duties, it obtains a good report, and deserves to be numbered among the aids to education. The finer feelings are called forth, and objectionable peculiarities are repressed. If this result, in some measure at least, be not produced, the amusement is vain. Emotions are worthless which do not grow into deeds; and the glass of manners is consulted to no purpose, unless the defect which it exhibits be re-

moved or weakened. The fruit of Fiction, regarded only as a luxury, will always be bitter; and we may expect to find the hard saying confirmed, which accused it of enervating the understanding and corrupting the heart.

XX.—History: its Charms and Lessons.

History presents the pleasantest features of Poetry and Fiction;—the majesty of the Epic; the moving accidents of the Drama; the surprises and moral of the Romance. Wallace is a ruder Hector; Robinson Crusoe is not stranger than Crœsus; the Knights of Ashby never burnish the page of Scott with richer lights of lance and armour, than the Carthaginians, winding down the Alps, cast upon Livy. Froissart's hero has all the minute painting of Richardson's. The poetic element is the life-blood of the narrative. The gazette glows into the drama; the pen-and-ink scrawl into the portrait.

History, in its simplest shape, is the account of a journey to investigate a country, its inhabitants, or one particular character. St. Paul told the Galatians that he went up to Jerusalem to see Peter—meaning to say, that he visited the Apostle to make himself more familiar with his mind and feelings. If St. Paul had written all that he saw and heard during the fifteen days of his abode, it would have been a "history." Of this pure form Herodotus offers the largest and the best specimens. His narrative is generally founded upon his observation.

He surveyed the battle-fields he describes, and keeping no regular journal, but relying upon memory and a few notes, he fell into some inaccuracies. For the most part, however, he has the freshness of an eye-witness. His picture of Egypt is a moving panorama of the Nile. Into whatever region he travels, he makes the reader a companion; whether he gazes upon the superb palace of Sais and its lighted hall of odours, the sepulchral Pyramids, or Babylon—even then in her waning splendour—as she rose to the Prophet's eye, "the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency." The interest of this familiar manner is lively and lasting, recalling that pleasant garrulity of Commines, which led an old French critic to say, that in reading him he seemed to be in the company of an honest gentleman who fought all his battles over again when the cloth was removed.

The same feeling of reality, in a severer tone, pleases us in Thucydides. Recording the troubles of Peloponnesus, he is Wellington telling the story of the Peninsular War. To the same class, in ancient days, belong Sallust and Tacitus; in modern, Guicciardini and Clarendon.

The second manifestation of History is that of Narrative founded on information drawn from others. It is Paul's visit to Peter related by Luke; or, the Spanish expedition of Scipio told by Polybius on the testimony of Lælius. Our venerable Bede is a humbler example.

History, in its third variety, loses the authority of observation. The only eye-sight employed is the

critical. State papers replace witnesses. Johnson indicated one of the immediate inconveniences of this change:—"He who describes what he never saw, draws from Fancy. Robertson paints minds, as Sir Joshua paints faces in a history-piece."

History may be considered in three lights—a pleasurable, an educational, and a moral: (1) as it entertains the fancy; (2) opens new sources of instruction; (3) and cherishes, or enlarges the feelings of virtue. In the first light, its poetical relationship is clearly marked. Imagination creates no grander episodes than the rise and fall of empires. To watch the first smiles and motions of national life in its cradle; to trace the growth, the maturity, and the decline of kingdoms; to observe one side of the world brightening in the sun of civilization, while the other is vapoury and cold; to see, in the course of years, the flourishing region become dim, and the dark country glimmer into warmth; Athens ascending into daylight, and Egypt sinking into shadow; learning setting over Greece to rise upon Italy; and dying at Rome to be rekindled at Bagdad:—these are visions to dazzle the eyes, and people the fancy of a poet.

It may be questioned whether the modern severity of research be as profitable as it is ingenious. Thucydides no longer weeps at the recitation of Herodotus. Legends of beauty continually disappear, and the rents in history become plainer as the ivy is torn away. Some eyes look sorrowfully upon this reformation. In the exquisite image of Landor, it is like breaking off a crystal from the vault of a twi-

light cavern, out of mere curiosity to see where the accretion ends and the rock begins.

The historian has one advantage over the poet. He is not obliged to look abroad for shining illustrations, or corresponding scenes of action. His images are ready; his field of combat is enclosed. He wants only so much vivacity as will supply colour and life to the description. Read the meeting of Cyrus and Artaxerxes in Xenophon. A white cloud spots the horizon; presently it grows bigger, and is discovered to be the dust raised by an enormous army. As the cloud advances, its lower edge of mist is seen to glitter in the sun; spear, and helm, and shield, shoot forth and vanish, and soon the ranks of horse and foot, with the armed chariots, grow distinctly visible. This is the splendour of the epic; it is Homer in prose.

In a different manner, take Drinkwater's description of the burning of the Spanish batteries at the siege of Gibraltar. The flames spread; a column of fire, rolling from the works, lights up the soldiers and every surrounding object; ship after ship is caught in the conflagration; the sea is dyed in a red blaze, and through the canopy of smoke the English artillery hurl terrible missiles. Tacitus, whom Warton calls a great poet, might furnish many dark scenes; as the sufferings of the Roman army under Cæcina, the dying watch-fires, the troubled slumbers, and the spectre dabbled in gore. A volume of Livy is a portfolio of sketches.

For an instance of the dramatic in modern history, the reader may go to Dalrymple. Dundee, wander-

ing about Lochabar with a few miserable followers, is roused by news of an English army in full march to the Pass of Killicranky. His hopes revive. He collects his scattered bands, and falls upon the enemy filing out of the stern gateway into the Highlands. In fourteen minutes infantry and cavalry are broken. Dundee, foremost in pursuit, as in attack, outstrips his people; he stops, and waves his hand to quicken their speed; while he is pointing eagerly to the Pass, a musket-ball pierces his armour. He rides from the field, but soon dropping from his horse, is laid under the shade of trees that stood near; when he has recovered of the faintness, he desires his attendants to lift him up, and turning his eyes to the field of combat, inquires, "How things went?" Being told that all is well, he replies with calm satisfaction, "Then I am well!" and expires.

Our poets have drawn splendid pictures of heroes falling in battle. Ben Jonson gives Catiline with the fierce hands still moving among the slain; Burns exhibits the warrior holding forth a bloody welcome to death, and breathing his last sigh in a faint huzza; and Scott surpassed both in Marmion waving his broken sword over his head, and shouting, "Victory!" But the closing scene of Dundee is the most affecting. Every circumstance heightens the catastrophe. His bed is the wild heather, shut in by a mountain bastion, of which the gloom is broken by frequent flashes of random guns. The Pass stretches in dreary twilight before us. The sound is in our ears of a dark river, foaming among splintered rocks—ever tumbling down and losing

itself in thick trees, while the eagle utters a lonely scream over the carnage, and sails away into the rolling vapours.

History, enjoying the pomp and circumstance of Poetry, is confined within narrower boundaries, and governed by stricter laws. Its portraits ought to be likenesses, so far as the writer's industry may acquaint him with the features of his characters. Peter the Great is always brutal on one side; and the senatorial dignity of Titian only allegorizes a French Convention.

Popular opinion allows more liberty to the pen and the pencil. It makes faithfulness subordinate to impression. Hannibal is never to be one-eyed, nor Marshal Vendôme hump-backed. The fame of a statesman must be written on his face, and the victories of a general in his muscles. No lean hand may grasp the spear of Achilles. A Dutch Scipio shuffles off the Burgomaster, and strides into his frame in a toga.

This view is encouraged by Reynolds, speaking the sentiment of an age when Garrick played Macbeth in a court-dress, with bag-wig and sword; and West astonished the world of Art by exhibiting the Death of Wolfe in all the simple grandeur of its truth. Reynolds, indeed, acknowledged his error in that half-hour which he spent before the finished picture of the hero; yet it may be conjectured that his prejudice was rather modified than removed. His theory of classical dignity in general would probably remain as it was before; and the ennobled presence of St. Paul in the Cartoon be still the object of his

admiration. The Epical prince of Raffaelle may be nearer to nature than the vulgar mechanic of Bassano; but the thoughtful eye looks for a middle form of expression, which shall be heroic, while it is real, and familiar, without being common. A painter is a historian writing with a pencil. But would Aquila and his wife have recognized their Hebrew brother—"in his bodily presence mean"—who abode with them, and wrought at Corinth? or Lydia, the seller of purple, have known, by a glance, the stranger whom she met along the river-side at Philippi? The moral of an exploit vanishes in the exaggeration of the doer. Surely that art is the truest which preserves and dignifies a defect. Let Agesilaus keep his hobble; and the Emperor's neck be awry in the marble. Show Falkland with an ungainly figure, and a rustic face brightened by inward beauty. Are we to look for a hero whose nobility is of the soul, and to behold only the tallest grenadier of the column? Why should Johnson's eyes be alike upon canvas? Is Milton to be cropped in a frontispiece?

We have an example of this false history-painting in the story of Nelson's coat at Trafalgar. He is reported to have silenced the affectionate importunity of his officers, entreating him to conceal the stars on his breast, by saying, "In honour I gained them, and in honour I will die with them." This is the heroic stature of the Great Style. Tacitus could not have put a finer sentiment into the mouth of Agricola. But its merit is simply imaginative. *Dr.* Arnold heard the facts from Sir Thomas Hardy.

Nelson wore on the day of the battle the same coat which he had worn for weeks, having the Order of the Bath embroidered upon it; and when his friend expressed some apprehension of the badge, he answered him that he was aware of the danger, but that it was "too late then to shift a coat."

This circumstance suggests a caution not to look for great causes of great things. A pamphlet often unlocks an octavo. Nothing is too contemptible to make a political catastrophe. The Peace of Utrecht was a squabble of the bedchamber; and we have the assurance of Burke that the war-cry of Walpole's enemies was only the hunger of Party breaking its chain.

(2.) History is to be regarded in an educational light, as it opens new sources of information. A scholar may be six thousand years old, and have learned brick-making under Pharaoh. Never lived such a citizen of the world; he was Assyrian at Babylon, Lacedæmonian at Sparta, Roman at Rome, Egyptian at Alexandria. He has been by turns a traveller, a merchant, a man of letters, and a commander-in-chief; presented at every court, he knew Daniel, and sauntered through the picture-gallery of Richelieu. Dryden called history a perspective glass, carrying the mind to a vast distance, and taking in the remotest objects of antiquity.

How many battles by sea and land the student has witnessed! He clambered with the Greeks along the rocky shore of Pylus; he heard the roar of falling houses when the Turks stormed Rhodes; three times he was beaten back with Condé by that

terrible Spanish infantry, which tossed off the French fire like foam from a cliff; he recognized Dante in the struggle of Campaldino; stood by the side of Cervantes when an arquebus carried away his left hand; and stooped with a misty lantern over the bleeding body of Moore.

A cultivated reader of History is domesticated in all families; he dines with Pericles, and sups with Titian. The Athenian fish-bell often invites him to the market to cheapen a noisy poulterer, or exchange compliments with a bakeress of inordinate fluency. A monk illuminating a Missal, and Caxton pulling his first Proof, are among the pleasant entries of his diary. He still stops his ears to the bellowing of Cleon; and remembers, as of yesterday, the rhetorical frown of the old tapestry, and the scarlet drapery of Pitt.

To study History is to study literature. The biography of a nation embraces all its works. No trifle is to be neglected. A mouldering medal is a letter of twenty centuries. Antiquities, which have been beautifully called History defaced, compose its fullest commentary. In these wrecks of many storms, which Time washes to the shore, the scholar looks patiently for treasure. The painting round a vase, the scribble on a wall, the wrath of a demagogue, the drollery of a farce, the point of an epigram—each possesses its own interest and value. A fossil court of law is dug out of an orator; and the Pompeii of Greece is discovered in the *Comedies* of Aristophanes.

Lord Bacon denounced abridgments with eloquent

anger. But who can traverse all history? When Johnson was asked by Boswell if he should read Du Halde's account of China, he said, "Why, yes, as one reads such books—that is to say, consult it." Of many large volumes the index is the best portion and the usefullest. A glance through the casement gives whatever knowledge of the interior is needful. An epitome is only a book shortened; and, as a general rule, the worth increases as the size lessens. There is truth in Young's comparison of elaborate compilations to the iron money of Lycurgus, of which the weight was so enormous, and the value so trifling, that a yoke of oxen only drew five hundreds pound sterling. The lives of nations, as of individuals, concentrate their lustre and interest in a few passages. Certain episodes must be selected; such as the ages of Pericles and Augustus, Elizabeth and Leo, Louis XIV. and Charles V. Sometimes a particular chapter embraces the wonders of a century; as the Feudal System, the dawn of Discovery, and the Printing Press. The fragments should be bound together by a connecting line of knowledge, however slender, encircling the whole fields of inquiries. The regal, the ecclesiastical, and the commercial elements are to be combined. The visitor must not spend his leisure in the Coliseum, to the exclusion of St. Peter's; nor think himself familiar with London, unless he goes to the Exchange.

(3.) The third aspect of History is the moral, as it cherishes the feelings of virtue, and enlarges their *action.* Southey felt confident that Clarendon, put

into his youthful hands, would have preserved him from the political follies which he lived to regret and outgrow. Guicciardini, also, has some claim to his reputation of communicating high thoughts to his readers; but the assertion that historians, in general, have been the true friends of virtue, will be rejected by all except the credulous, or the indifferent.

We have only one national record of which the single design is to elevate and direct the mind. Jewish History is God's Illuminated Clock set in the dark steeple of Time. It is man's world which common narrative describes. Actions are weighed in man's scales. The magnitude of a deed determines its character. Paul Jones is a pirate; Napoleon is a conqueror. One assassination is a murder; ten thousand deaths are glory. Yet it is supposable that, in the eyes of angels, a struggle down a dark lane and a battle of Leipsic differ in nothing but excess of wickedness.

History is a moral teacher, however, in despite of its ministers. When Poussin gathered a handful of dust from the ground, and declared it to be ancient Rome, he was abridging philosophy in an epitaph. Tyre, burned by Alexander, and sacked by the Mamelukes, is a homily on fortune.

> "What does not Fate? The tower that long had stood
> The crashing thunder and the warring winds,
> Shook by the sure but slow destroyer Time,
> Now hangs in doubtful ruin o'er its base,
> And flinty pyramids and walls of brass
> Descend. The Babylonian spires are sunk;
> Achaia, Rome, and Egypt, moulder down.
> Time shakes the stable tyranny of thrones,
> And tottering empires sink with their own weight."

There is a sound of solemn sadness in the saying, that the glory of man is but as the flower of grass—a more perishable thing than the grass itself, more alluring to the eye, but exposed to fiercer enemies, and to the swifter ruin of the scythe. They are gone—the tyrants of ancient dynasties, with their splendour and cruelty—and have bequeathed to their successors the warning voice of the Prophet, "*Where will ye leave your glory?*" Think of the question having been asked of Sesostris, or Belshazzar! But so it comes to pass. Their magnificence is taken off, like robes and crowns when a coronation is over. The great Conqueror strikes his sword into life, and a gulf yawns between Cæsar and his legions. The glory remains on this side of the chasm. The light of an empire dies out, like embers on a cottager's hearth. All the flashing shields of Persia, with the silver throne of Xerxes in the midst, could not cast one ray into the shadows. How is the king to summon his guard? What bridge may swing across the darkness between Eternity and Time?

But History teaches another lesson from the grandeur of olden Monarchs, before the moth fretted their purple. It was not alone the crumpled rose-leaf that tortured their enervated senses. Fears, mysterious and spectral, continually rose up with menacing aspect. Oriental annals are funeral sermons. Southey has painted, with a truthful sublimity, the feelings of Mahommedan sovereigns,—mourners in magnificent festivals, wretched in the sunshine and smiles of Beauty, and ever listening, in

the golden palace, for the Destroyer's trumpet at the gate. The apprehension haunted them in youth, and overwhelmed them with a horrible dread in age. A vision in the night, a strain of music, a strange face in needlework, startled them into tears. "Haroun al Raschid opened a volume of poems, and read, 'Where are the kings, and where are the rest of the world? They are gone the way which thou shalt go. O thou who choosest a perishable world, and callest him happy whom it glorifies, take what the world can give thee, but Death is at the end!' And at these words, he who had murdered Yahia and the Barmecides wept."

Whatever chapter of History we may open, some text of alarm is certain to strike our eye. Europe shares the terrors of Asia. In the noble words of Raleigh, "Death, which hateth and destroyeth a man, is believed; God, which hath made him and loves him, is always deferred." But Conscience, chilled by the stealing shadow, tosses on its bed. Charles the Fifth unclutches Navarre; and the remembered blood of martyrs drops heavily—the warning of the storm—upon the pillow of Francis.

XXI.—The Flowers of History—Biography.

History is a great painter, with the world for canvas, and life for a figure. It exhibits Man in his pride, and Nature in her magnificence:—Jerusalem bleeding under the Roman, or Lisbon vanishing in flame and earthquake. History must be splendid.

Bacon called it the pomp of business. Its march is in high places, and along the pinnacles and points of great affairs. The extent and brilliancy of the picture render the execution difficult and unsatisfactory. The historian cannot isolate a hero, or a saint. The contagion of some infamous example infects his narrative. The impudent stare of a Castlemaine confronts a Barrow. Sir Thomas Browne had this inconvenience in his thoughts when he complained that History sets down things which ought never to have been done, or never to have been known, and suggested the advantage of choosing noble patterns from among different nations. Such a choice makes Biography—of which Fuller has sketched a happy outline, declaring its proper aim and task to consist in, (1) gaining some glory to God; (2) preserving the memory of the dead; (3) holding forth examples to the living; (4) and furnishing entertainment to the reader.

The last quality gives to Biography the most attractive shape of instruction. The voyage and the journey of life are related with every variety of accidents, shipwrecks, and escapes. Biography is the home-aspect of History, as it gives the history of manners. It is Washington in his corn-fields at Mount Vernon; or Pitt sowing the fragmentary opera-hat in the garden. "For my own part," is the confession of Dryden, referring to History, in which he included Biography, "who must confess it to my shame, that I never read anything but for pleasure, it has always been the most delightful entertainment of my life." The same passion was

pleasantly manifested in the Danish poet, Oehlenschläger, who, when a boy, and leading his father's choir at church, listened eagerly to the lessons of the day, but disappeared behind the organ at the first hint of the divided sermon.

Plutarch, by the general consent of Criticism, is the representative of popular Biography. He has three of Fuller's distinctive notes very largely developed; nor, according to his measure of knowledge and light, is he wanting in the religious element. An ingenious rhymer of a former day asserts his claim to our admiration and regard:—

> "O blest Biography! thy charms of yore
> Historic Truth to strong affection bore;
> And fostering Virtue gave thee, as thy dower,
> Of both thy parents the attractive power
> To win the heart, the wavering thought to fix,
> And fond delight with wise instruction mix.
> First of thy votaries, peerless and alone,
> Thy PLUTARCH shines, by moral beauty known;
> Enchanting Sage! whose living lessons teach
> What heights of Virtue human efforts reach."

Plutarch stands between the Historian, the Poet, and the Romancer, and catches the beautiful lights of all. His account of Theseus resembles a legend from an old chronicle, or a chapter of magic. He indicates his theory of composition at the beginning of "Alexander," where he observes that the virtues or the vices of men are not always seen best in their most distinguished, or notorious exploits; but that oftentimes an indifferent action, a short saying, or a ready jest, opens more intricacies of the true character than a siege, or a battle. He supports his argument by the practice of Painters, who bestow their

chief labour on the face and eyes of the sitter, and run over other parts of the picture with a hastier brush. In like manner the Biographer, whose book is a portrait, is recommended to copy with diligence the features of the mind, and that changeful expression which may be learned from its eyes. The detail and circumstances of a scholar's industry, or a politician's plot, he can touch in a broad outline, or leave to historical inquirers.

Plutarch's *Lives* recall Titian's portraits. He shows the face of a hero, or a philosopher, in the roughness, the glow, and the shadows of thought and motion. His individuality is never hard. He causes the representation of character to help the attainment of a general and striking effect. His memoirs are the Picturesque of Biography. Reading becomes sight as some vivid touch animates and fixes the scene. Cæsar in the Senate house, surrounded by conspirators, and turning his face in every direction, meets only the gleam of steal. Pyrrhus, wounded and faint, suddenly opens his eyes on Zopyrus, in the act of waving a sword over his neck, and darts at him so fierce a look, that he springs back in terror, and his hands tremble. On another occasion, the white charger of Sylla, lashed by a servant who saw his danger, carries the rider with a plunge between two falling spears.

The slight circumstances of Plutarch are not mere anecdotes, inserted for the sake of amusement. They are traits of feeling and disposition; short lines from a page of the heart put into italics. Homer is not more pleasantly natural. He tells us of his little girl,

and her anxiety that her dolls might share in the attentions of the nurse. One stroke of the pen identifies Agesilaus. Returning from the victory of Chæronea, he makes no alteration in his furniture, or establishment, and wishes his daughter to be contented with her plain wooden carriage. We have all the wilfulness of Cleopatra epitomized when, to avoid discovery, she rolls herself in a carpet, and being carefully tied up at full length, is delivered in the dusk of the evening, like a large parcel, at the palace of Cæsar.

Occasionally he introduces little views of fields and gardens, which are extremely agreeable. When Lucullus, abandoning his Parthian expedition, marched in the middle of summer against Tigranes, and had gained the summit of Mount Taurus, he saw with wonder that the corn was still green. At a later season, his soldiers were wetted every day in the narrow woody roads, by snow that fell on them from the trees.

The charm of Plutarch has allured many imitators. In modern times, Vasari breathed into the histories of painters and men of art the engaging simplicity and freshness of the Greek. We seem to listen to the Masters whom he describes, and find the exclamation of Lanzi upon our tongue :—It was thus that Raffaelle and Andrea taught their scholars, and the sharp, quick sentence flashed from the lips of Buonarotti. It is true that the reputation of Vasari has been built up by scholarly hands. He enjoyed the aid which Reynolds was accused of concealing, and had his Johnson in a Camalduline monk.

Hume wished Robertson to adopt this familiar kind of history, and make Plutarch his model for a series of modern lives. Avoiding disquisition, the characters of celebrated persons were to be illustrated by domestic anecdotes, striking observations, and a general sketch of their employments. Hume also turned the eye of his friend upon the little groups of inferior actors, with faces more or less known, whom, in his happy phrase, we meet in the corners of history.

The proposal was ingenious, as it showed the way to fill a gallery with portraits of discoverers, statesmen, painters, and men of letters. The annals of an age would be combined in a single view, while the reader, standing in the open field of universal history, and overlooking the barren places, might gather all the flowers, and make everything good and pleasant his own.

The least interesting form of Biography is the Political. A life of Walpole is a prolonged record of the wrangling of Party. Who cares for Harley, except as the friend of Pope? The lives of soldiers are scarcely more satisfactory. The incidents are sorrows; and only in rare cases, as in the British struggle with Napoleon, is the sympathy of the reader justly awakened. A thousand dreary chapters of ambition and blood must be waded over, before the leaf opens upon Waterloo or Corunna. The sea is fruitfuller of instruction; and Nelson and Collingwood supply manuals of patriotism and affection. The hardships of the sailor bring out another instance of Johnson's waywardness. Cook's

voyages had just appeared, and pointing to them, he exclaimed,—"A man had better work his way before the mast, than read these through. There can be no entertainment in such books." Yet a voyage, which is only a life upon water, seems to possess that variety of daring and escape which common lives want. Its reality is romance. The sufferings of Anson live with the faëry tale of childhood, and the battered ship still drops to anchor with its ghastly crew, before the green and happy island. The story of La Pérouse is a scene of tragedy that touches other hearts, besides that of the poet who said,—

> "His pages had a zest
> More sweet than fiction to my wondering breast,
> When, rapt in fancy, many a boyish day
> I tracked his wanderings o'er the watery way.
> He came not back—Conjecture's cheek grew pale,
> Year after year in no propitious gale,
> His lilied banner held its homeward way,
> And Science saddened at her Martyr's stay."

Biography, exclusively serious, or devotional, contains many elements of beauty. The sequestered teacher, the zealous missionary, and the glorified martyr, have characteristic features of sublimity and tenderness. How curious is our sensation in closing an account of Marlborough, or Richelieu, and taking up the gentle portraitures of Walton. It is like being suddenly carried from the Thames, between London and Greenwich, rocking its stately ships, and lined by busy wharfs, into the pastoral Wye, with its green farms, and the solemn ruins of God's House. Compare a splendid saloon

in Paris with the holy scene in the old palace of Salisbury, where we behold—

> "The trusty staff that Jewel gave
> To youthful Hooker, in familiar style
> The gift exalting, and with playful smile."

The Panegyric once spoken of a departed saint is true of every other; and if an age be evil and deserve him not, it is the more needful to have such lives preserved in memory, to instruct our piety, or upbraid our sins. And so, after the tree of Paradise has been cut down, the dead trunk may help to uphold the falling temple, or kindle a fire upon the altar.

The history of men of science has one peculiar advantage, as it shows the importance of little things in producing great results. Smeaton learned his principle of constructing a lighthouse, by noticing the trunk of a tree to be diminished from a curve to a cylinder. Rembrandt's marvellous system of splendour and shade was suggested by accidental gleams of light in his father's mill. White of Selborne, carrying about in his rides and walks a list of birds to be investigated; and Newton, turning an old box into a water-clock, or the yard of a house into a sundial, are examples of those habits of patient observation which scientific biography attractively recommends.

But the annals of pure literature afford the highest gratification, whether the subject be a poet, a philosopher, or that refined inquirer after beauty and wisdom who passes under the universal name of scholar. It was the belief of Johnson that no lite-

rary life in England had been well written. The gorgeous tale of genius is always left half told. Time, which destroys its memorials, enlarges its lustre. It is only since biography and letters became convertible into gold, that the contemporaries of famous men preserve and publish the sayings of the departed. How we might have rejoiced if Occleve, instead of prefixing to a manuscript a portrait of Chaucer, had given a few recollections of the poet himself, and fragments of his table-talk about the Pilgrimage to Canterbury; or if Ben Jonson, who survived Shakspere twenty-one years, had presented to the world a short review of his friend's festive evenings! But the age made no sign when its noblest son passed away. The birth, the marriage, the authorship, and the retirement of Shakspere compose his biography. If we seek for news of prejudices, infirmities, charity, and love, it is found in his verses alone. Deep is the sigh of taste for lost treasures, whether it muses upon the sweet, serious conversation of Spenser, the gilded current of Hooker's sequestered thoughtfulness, the variegated wisdom of Milton, the magnificent explorings of Bacon, or the paradisiacal dreams of Taylor. Few footprints remain on the sand before the ever-flowing tide. Long ago it washed out Homer's. Curiosity follows him in vain. Greece and Asia perplex us with a rival Stratford-upon-Avon. The rank of Aristophanes is only conjectured from his gift to two poor players of Athens. Of every country and season the complaint is felt and uttered. Precious would be the *journal* by a Florentine De Foe of the indoor

occupations of Dante. Think of beholding, as in a clear glass, Macchiavelli living along the lines of his political web; Galileo watching the moon plough her way across the clouds; or Tasso, with Polybius in his hand, marshalling the knights of Godfrey.

The most delightful life is that which a loving friend or admirer composes from his own recollections. Boswell's *Johnson* is the model and the master-piece. In a humbler way, Roger North's account of the Lord-keeper Guildford and his two brothers is admirable for its dramatic truth and character. Of one of these, a Turkish merchant, who returned to England in the reign of Charles the Second, he has left a sketch so lively and particular, that we seem to have lived in the same house. We accompany him to Bridewell, and mark his trepidation at the turnkey with the gruff voice, who recalled the alarming "Chiaus" of Constantinople; we hold our breath at his daring adventure in the tower of Bow Church, when he swung his corpulent body round the column; or take his arm to St. Paul's, on Saturdays, when Sir Christopher Wren was there, to have "a snatch of discourse" about the building.

The account of Wolsey by Cavendish has the same truthfulness and reality. It is a picture-book done by the pen. What a breathing, moving panorama is the Cardinal's day! The two "masses" being over, he comes from his chamber about eight of the clock, all in red, with an upper garment of taffety, or most commonly of fine crimson satin engrained; his tippet of sables is round his neck, and in his hand he carries the mysterious orange, full of

aromatic sponge, and anxiously held to the nose when the throng presses him, or a suitor grows troublesome. Not a feature of the procession is lost. We see the princely "hat" borne by a gentleman of worship "right solemnly," words which have a sound of the Vatican; his mule with scarlet pillion and gilt stirrups; his cross-bearers on great horses; his train of noblemen and chivalry; and his four footmen, bearing burnished pole-axes that catch the sun. And so the king's favourite rides to the door of Westminster Hall. No limner, in the monastic shade, hung more fondly over his illuminated saint, than the gentleman-usher of Wolsey upon the lineaments of his Cardinal.

Whether much or little be known, no secrets should be kept. Biography is useless which is not true. The weaknesses of character must be preserved, however insignificant or humbling. The jest-book of Tacitus, the medicated drinks of Bacon, the extempore rhymes of Cheselden, the preparatory violin of Bourdaloue, and the fancy-lighting damsons of Dryden, have their place and value. They are the errata of genius, and clear up the text. A French mathematician had pleasant doubts concerning the animal wants of Newton, and was disposed to regard him as an intellectual being, in whom the mind's flame had absorbed each grosser particle. It is a precipitous fall from dividing a ray of light, or writing *Comus*, to weariness and dinner. But Biography admonishes pride, when it displays Salmasius, the champion of kings, shivering under the eye and [illegible] *of his* wife; or bids us stand at the door of

Milton's academy, and hear the scream and the ferule upstairs. It steals on the Poet and the Premier in their undress:—Cowley in dressing-gown and slippers, and Cecil with his Treasurer's robe on the chair.

The works of an author are not always evidence for the biographer, because talent has a professional temper which it manifests in type, or colours. Watteau was only gay in a landscape, and Young was cheerful without his pen. A delicate judgment distinguishes the natural from the artistic frame of thought. But in numberless instances the book or the picture is a commentary on the mind that produced it, and corrects a false opinion of character and endowments. Walton imagined Hooker to have been simple and childlike in worldly affairs; whereas the *Polity* shows an acute observer of mankind, and a vein of strong and quiet humour flowing through the learned argument.

When a man relates his own life, we call it an Autobiography. These portraits may be captivating, but can seldom be trusted. The composer unconsciously, or by design, modifies and softens a harsh feature, or an unpleasing expression. His *ideal* of excellence answers the purpose of a painter's lay-figure. He disposes and dresses it in favourable lights and rich draperies. A deformed mind is muffled in cloth of gold. Such a person resembles Prior giving his picture to St. John's in a brocaded suit. A vice, or a bad custom, strongly marked and decided, is shaded off into a neutral tint. How amusing is Clarendon's vindication of his appetite,

when, speaking in the third person, he says:—"He indulged his palate very much, and even took some delight in eating and drinking, but without any approach to luxury." In Brown's singular piece of mind-painting, the same self-delusion is conspicuous, and throws a doubtfulness over the whole. It is the physician's likeness drawn by himself, and presented to posterity. The mightier the writer, the more his tale will be suspected. It was hinted by Cæsar's enemies that his *Commentaries*, which are a chapter of autobiography, would have been longer if he had inserted his defeats.

Notwithstanding its defects, personal narrative is always entertaining. No style admits so many trifles; moreover, autobiographers are generally on good terms with themselves, and amuse us, in spite of our contempt. To this class belongs Colley Cibber's *Apology*, which is the elaborate miniature of a Gossip. Cellini's mood is higher and darker. He opens his mind to the public gaze, and records with imperturbable tranquillity the symptoms of its disease and its health. We see him in every posture of debasement; abandoned and superstitious; a scorner of the ignorant, and a believer in magic; passing, by one step, from a brutal insult to a religious sonnet, and fighting a duel with his eye upon Providence.

The scholar's story is told by Huet, Bishop of Avranches. The order never had an abler representative. Of noble descent, he lost his parents in childhood, and fought his way to learning through all the ingenuity of persecution. His schoolfellows

stole his books, tore his papers, or wetted them until the ink ran. During play-time they barred up his door; to enjoy a quiet hour of study he rose with the sun, while his tormentors were asleep, or hid himself in the thick shade of the wood. But his efforts were unsuccessful. His companions hunted the student among the bushes, and drove him from his concealment. At length he became his own master, and the hill of knowledge and fame was rapidly climbed. From the age of twenty almost up to ninety years, he pursued his studies with a vigour that no labour could subdue. Languor was unknown to his iron nerves. After six or seven hours spent in mental toil, he cheerfully closed his books, singing to himself, and ready and eager for a new encounter.

We owe these lighter touches of self-portraiture to the form of composition which Huet selected. A grave historian would have hesitated to relate the prodigies of fencing, jumping, and muscular strength, which he appears to have esteemed, as Johnson exulted in his "seat" after hounds. But as the individual record of perseverance and learning, the autobiography of Huet is invaluable. What age will behold another scholar to whom astronomy and Greek were equally easy? who dissected with his own hand three hundred eyes, and edited the Delphin Classics?

Occasionally a true poet weaves into his verse the experiences and the delights of his early or later life. Few threads give more beauty to the web. The first canto of the *Minstrel* is an interesting ex-

ample, showing how the heart of Beattie throbs in the breast of Edwin; while the grassy turf,

"With here and there a violet bestrown,"

the woody glen, the murmuring brook, the boughs rustled by the owl, the breezy down, and the misty hill clearing before the sun—are only so many reflections of Lawrencekirk, and the lonely hamlet of Ferdoun. Collins resembles Beattie. Each ode is an episode of his own inner life displayed in colours. When the poet speaks without concealment in his own person, the biographical surprise is still more grateful. Cowper illustrates the reality, as Beattie shows the allegory. Who does not love his remembered walk,

"Ankle-deep in moss and flowery thyme"?

or the confession of his impatience, in the winter evenings, to open the "folio of four pages," which

"The herald of a noisy world,
With spattered boots, strapped waist, and frozen locks,
News from all nations lumbering at his back,"

had just dropped at the inn-door. And Akenside wrote few passages so tender and pleasing as the lines, in which he throws a backward glance of pensive regret, upon the youthful hours he passed at Morpeth:—

"O ye Northumbrian shades, which overlook
The rocky pavement and the mossy falls
Of solitary Wensbeck's limpid stream,
How gladly I recall your well-known seats,
Beloved of old; and that delightful time,
When all alone, for many a summer's day,
I wandered through your calm recesses, led
In silence, by some powerful hand unseen."

In our own day, the poetry of Wordsworth has carried the biographical style to its utmost boundary.

Sometimes Autobiography takes the earnest tone of Confessions, as in the penitential gloom of Augustine, and the melodrama of Rousseau. Frequently it flows into the short entries of the Journal; Evelyn hears an admirable sermon by Pearson; and Pepys sheds tears for a feather or a doublet. Letters are acknowledged memoirs of Self. Horace Walpole's correspondence inlays his own mind in mosaic. The epistolary style is always artificial. The opening of the heart to a friend is one of the fables of the golden age. Even Cowper had a tinge for his cousin. What a despiser of verses was Pope by the *Post!* But the frozen housekeeper of Lord Oxford would have told a different story when, in one winter night of the terrible "Forty," she answered the impatient poet's fourth bell for a sheet of paper.

From the lessons of Biography four may be chosen. (1.) It suggests a comparison between the difficulties of earlier and later readers:—

> "On shelf of deal, beside the cuckoo-clock,
> Of cottage-reading rests the chosen stock,"

which might have bewildered by its luxury a divine of 1300. The Greek sage had few aids. Plato devoted three hundred pounds to the purchase of three books of a distinguished Pythagorean; and Aristotle invested twice that sum in the small library of a deceased philosopher. Jerome nearly ruined himself to procure the works of Origen; and Leo bartered five hundred pieces of gold for five books of Tacitus. The biographer may moralise on the pen he holds. Petrarch being at Liege, in the earlier half of the fourteenth century, and anxious to copy two speeches

of Cicero, with difficulty obtained a few drops of ink as yellow as saffron.

(2.) Biography cheers merit when its hopes are drooping. It leads the student down a gallery of portraits, and gives the comforting or warning history of each. It shows Jackson working on his father's shop-board, and cherishing a love for Art by a visit to Castle Howard; Richardson, a printer's apprentice, stealing an hour from sleep to improve his mind, and scrupulously buying his own candle, that his master might not be defrauded; or the Chinese scholar Morrison, labouring at his trade of a last and boot maker, and keeping his lamp from blowing out with a volume of Matthew Henry's *Commentary*.

Occasionally one incident in the life of a remarkable person contains the most profitable instruction. Prior, on the death of his father, was sent to Westminster School, which he left to assist his uncle, a vintner at Charing-cross. He remembered Busby, and made Horace the companion of his leisure. The Latin poet was to be the key of his fortunes. The Rummer Tavern was the Club of the Nobility, and numbered among its visitors the celebrated Lord Dorset, to whom Dryden addressed his *Essay* on dramatic poetry, and who, before he grew fat and nervous, was the gayest converser of that sparkling age. Upon one occasion he found the vintner's nephew reading Horace. A different version of the story is given, but with the same result. He expressed his interest in the young man's welfare, and undertook the care of his education. Cambridge air

ripened his powers. He rose to political renown, maintained at Versailles his reputation for wit, and returning to England drew from Swift the announcement, "Prior is come home from France for a few days; *Stocks rise at his coming.*"

(3.) Biography turns our eyes from the present to the future. In life, Gorgias may be more applauded than Plato, and Salieri snatch the reward from Mozart. Years bring the change and the recompense. The statue follows the hemlock of Phocion; and the chair of Boccaccio is raised over the ashes of Dante. A picture, for which Wilkie, in his early London life, received fifteen guineas, was recently sold for eight hundred. Biography is the application of History to the heart, and its chiefest fruit is patience. He who strives to make himself different from other men by much reading is justly said to gain this advantage, that in ill fortune he has something left of entertainment and comfort.

(4.) The grandest lesson of Biography is the need of moral and religious principle. This is the burden of all its music. Stop for a moment before that youthful face, which shoots such a fitful and dazzling brightness from its proud, visionary eyes. It is the portrait of Chatterton. Begin with his childhood. At six years of age he did not know A; he spent the same number of months in reaching P. Prior's plan of alluring the scholar with gingerbread letters, to be eaten as they are learned, might have failed. Suddenly a spark dropped on the cold mind. His mother tore up an old music-book for waste paper, and the painted capitals caught his eye. She said

that he fell in love with the manuscript, A black-letter Bible completed the conquest of the dunce. He awoke like a giant, morning, noon, and evening, devouring books with unsatisfied hunger.

His temptation grew with his intellect. A manufacturer requested him to choose a device, or inscription, for a cup. "Paint me," answered the boy, "an angel with wings and a trumpet, to trumpet my name over the world." It was Milton's daring without his prayer. The tempter of Chatterton was pride. One of his latest letters is still preserved, in which the terrible working of an ungoverned spirit is shown by the emphasis of his pen. "It is my PRIDE, my native, unconquerable pride, that plunges me into distraction. You must know that nineteen-twentieths of my composition is Pride. I must either live a slave, or a servant—to have no will of my own, no sentiments of my own, which I may freely declare as such—or DIE."

To feed this pride he robbed his neighbours. It is quite conceivable that a boy-genius, overflowing with mirthful strength, might banter a pompous pewterer by a Norman pedigree, or a dull topographer with a castle in the clouds. But Chatterton's aim was money. His literary frauds were the rudimental efforts of a forger. The pride that enslaved his soul at Bristol, drove him to London. Its bondage became fiercer. One after another his home-thoughts and recollections are whirled away, like spring blossoms in a hurricane. The black-letter Bible is lost in shadow. Mother, and sisters, the gifts of love, and the lights of ambition, disap-

pear. Only Pride remains. He retires to his dreary chamber; collects his fragments of verse and prose; tears them in pieces; mingles the poison; swallows it, and plunges over the ghastly precipice in sullen, tempestuous, magnificent despair.

O words to be written in gold!—

"Woe be to the youthful poet who sets out upon his pilgrimage to the Temple of Fame, with nothing but hope for his viaticum! There is the Slough of Despond, and the Hill of Difficulty, and the Valley of the Shadow of Death upon the Way."

XXII.—Literature of the Pulpit—its Entertainment.

When Beauclerk's books were sold, Wilkes expressed his astonishment at finding so large a collection of sermons in the library of a fashionable scholar. Johnson said, "Why, sir, you are to remember that sermons make a considerable branch of English literature." The caution might be widely spread. In every Christian land the learned mind has poured its choicest gifts into Theology. Chrysostom warms the fourth century like a sun. The discourses of St. Bernard are shining lights in dark ages. Dante, whom he preceded by more than a hundred years, caught no views of Paradise from the mountain-top so fruitful and serene. If we turn our eyes to France, Bossuet is her grandest poet, and Pascal eclipses Montesquieu.

The gloomy recess of an ecclesiastical library is

like a harbour, into which a far-travelling Curiosity has sailed with its freight, and cast anchor. The ponderous tomes are bales of the mind's merchandise. Odours of distant countries and times steal from the red leaves, the swelling ridges of vellum, and the titles in tarnished gold. Davenant's description of their covers sprinkled with dust, and long streets of spiders' webs, is striking as the lesson it gives is significant.

These are the controversies and the speculations of the schoolmen, and would scarcely be found on the shelves of Beauclerk. But the elder rhetoric, which had taken the shape of exhortation, abounds in elements of interest and materials of deep or elegant thinking, which the polite reader may separate from the text. Each volume is a common-place book of brilliant sayings and erudite allusions; a treasure-house of products and antiquities from every climate and age of intellect. Here are gathered, without much attempt at order or classification, battered armour of Homeric chiefs, dry chips of Seneca, poisoned arrows of Juvenal, magical flutes of Apuleius, grotesque words coined by that great minter, Tertullian, and spiritual clothing of wrought gold from Chrysostom. He who seeks for amusement can find it. The slightest circumstances of ancient and modern life are preserved;—from the vermilion cord with which the public officer pursued and marked the Athenians who neglected the Assemblies, to the first appearance of the *umbrella* in London.

The preachers of the sixteenth and seventeenth

centuries are its familiar historians. Latimer opens the royal kitchen. Andrews leads common life into the sun. We learn from Donne how street-begging had become a trade in 1625. Parents educated their children in it, and expert professors of the art received apprentices, whom they perfected in making a face and a story. Perhaps the English preacher caught this habit of sketching manners from Chrysostom, in whose Homilies we obtain so many lively views of Constantinople and Antioch; who, in enforcing the study of the Scriptures, dissuades parents from hanging the Gospels round the neck of a child, or near the bed, as a charm; and condemns the rich for using dice every day, and keeping their sumptuous Bibles shut up in the cases.

During two hundred years, the sermon shaped and nourished the English mind. Greek and Latin fountains of philosophy and grace flowed into Poetry from the Pulpit. Shakspere might have picked up crumbs of Plato and Euripides from the orator of Paul's Cross. The preacher had a religious and an instructive character. He entertained that he might improve the hearer. He unfolded the grandeur of a Prophecy, or the comfort of an Epistle, and alarmed the conscience, or bound up a wounded heart; he brought tidings of foreign learning to the scholar, of discoveries to the naturalist, and of manners to the people; and thus he won the ears of the thoughtful, the inquisitive, and the idle.

The sermon reflected the research, the feelings, and the experience of the speaker. The reading of a *week* slipped into a parenthesis. If Donne sets

forth the praises of devout women in the morning of Christianity, he remembers a Venetian story about the matrons who were sent to propitiate an empress. In showing that sin separates a man from God, he tells the congregation of his own visit to Aix-la-Chapelle for the sake of the Baths, and how the house he lodged in—big enough for a small parish—was occupied by swarms of Anabaptists, who agreed in nothing but keeping apart from one another; the father excommunicating the son on the third floor, and the uncle his nephew in the attic.

Amusement is only the accident of our early eloquence. In devotion, learning, argument, and imagination, it is unequalled. It comes warm from the Bible. The irradiated mind shoots a glory into the commonest word, and Christian duties are drawn with so much patience of love and embellishment, that later pens seem to produce faint and imperfect copies. Mr. Keble illustrates one of his poems by a passage from Miller's *Bampton Lectures;* but it will be seen that the comparison had been employed two centuries before by Donne, and at a later period by Seed. Its last appearance is in a discourse of Mr. Melvill:—

THE EYE OF THE PORTRAIT.

Miller.	Donne.
"The point worthy of observation is, to note how a book of the description and compass which we have represented Scripture to be, possesses this versatility of power: this eye, like that of a portrait, uniformly fixed upon us, turn where we will."	"Be, therefore, no stranger to this face; see Him here that you may know Him, and He you there; and then, as a picture looks upon him who looks upon it, God, upon whom thou keepest thine eye, will keep his eye upon thee."

SEED.

"When the discourse is directed to us, lending a favourable attention, and making pertinent replies; like a fine picture which seems to fix an eye upon, and direct its views to each person in the room, who looks upon it, and eyes it attentively."

MELVILL.

"Such is your nature that, without constant vigilance, the direction may be gradually changed, and yet appear to you the same, even as the eyes of a well-drawn portrait follow you as you move, and so might persuade you that you had not moved at all."

The thought, indeed, may be found in a lightre page. When Colonel Everard revisited the parlour in Woodstock Lodge, where the old portrait of Victor Lee was suspended, "He remembered how . . . when left alone in the apartment, the searching eye of the old warrior *seemed always bent upon his, in whatever part of the room he placed himself.*"

Read one more example from a preacher of the Elizabethan age, and of the present:—

OLD CHURCHES.

HENRY SMITH.

"This is our life, while we enjoy it; we lose it like the sun, which flies swifter than arrow, and yet no man perceives that it moves. He which lasted 900 years could not hold out one hour longer; and what is he now more than a child that lived but a year? Where are they which founded this goodly city? which possessed these fair houses, and walked in these pleasant fields; which entered these stately temples; which kneeled in these seats; which preached out of this place but thirty years ago? Is not earth turned to earth, and shall not our sun set like theirs when the night comes?"

BRADLEY.

"Even the works of our own hands remain much longer than we. The pyramids of Egypt have defied the attacks of 3000 years, while their builders sank, perhaps, under the burden of fourscore. Our houses stand long after their transient proprietors are gone, and their names forgotten. Where is now the head that planned, and the hand which built this house of God? They were all reduced to ashes 500 years ago. The very seats we sit on have borne generations before they bore us, and will probably bear many after us. The remains of those who once occupied the places we now fill are underneath our feet."

It is not intended to accuse the moderns of wilfully defrauding the ancients. The resemblances may be

unintentional. The object of the parallel is to urge the diligent study of our ancestors in divinity. The antique legend, which gave the sweetest song to nightingales that built their nests near the tomb of Orpheus, may have a moral for prose.

The elaborateness of the early style was not felt to be wearisome. Hearers and readers in 1600 were seldom in a hurry. But now and then rambling through the reigns of Elizabeth and James, or of the first and second Charles, we overtake a loitering expounder, who has a large gift of tediousness, and might have assisted the German professor in his course of lectures upon the first chapter of Isaiah, which extended over twenty years, and was left unfinished. In the true Masters of theological rhetoric, however, the wandering and scattered utterance had, generally, intention and method. They spread out their thoughts and images, as a skilful general invests a strong fortress with troops; and threw reasoning into a circle, to besiege a hostile argument and cut off escape. Milton's definition is realized. The words in "well-ordered files fall aptly into their places." Similes and metaphors are rarely ornamental figures, mere combatants on a rhetorical parade, with music and standards for show. They carry weapons, and are ready for action.

The epoch of elegance had not arrived, and the eye of taste discovers many violations of its laws; but the most objectionable fault is the mixture of spiritual and worldly things; as in continental cities a shop is encrusted on a cathedral. South is a [redacted]*table offender*. He writes a political note on a

Gospel, and couples Cromwell and Peter in a sentence. Much of this familiarity may be traced to the Miracle-play, which had left a popular impression behind it. Statesmen and Prelates were scarcely alive to the discord: in the first edition of the Bishops' Bible the portrait of Leicester was prefixed to Joshua; and, in 1574, the arms of the Primate Parker replaced Burleigh as a decoration of the Psalms.

In whatever light we examine it, the sermon of the seventeenth century continues to be a problem of literature. It flourished in ignorance and withered under education. The "plain" manner came in with the National school. Day by day, the jewels of the Breastplate were more clouded, and the superb scenery of Truth was buried deeper in snow. The public mind has taken the tone of its teachers. Sublimity is darkness, and the glow of the Prophet is a poetical turn. Imagine Donne re-appearing in the Chapel of Lincoln's Inn with one of the discourses which he delivered to the Society of 1618. Let him exhibit, in all its fulness, that manifold style which was the delight of his friends and of the crowd;—the imperial logic, the gorgeous perspective of imagery, the poem in a word, the melting pathos, the rapturous piety, and the splendour of language that flowed over the argument and adorned it, like a crimson mantle upon armour. Picture the uneasy rustle of the Benchers, and the bewilderment of the Verger.

Why should "sleep" and "sermon" be longer accepted as synonymes by the vulgar? A judge and

a master recommended Demosthenes to the village preacher. Surely, any style is better than that which is plain in the complete absence of expression, and simple in having no thoughts to convey. Is it surprising if the dead masses slumber under such appeals? The fervour of the old eloquence is needed to strike heat into the sinner. His cure is to be wrought by no servile hand. Gehazi might have laid Elisha's staff for ever upon the Shunammite's child. The eyes open only to the Prophet's call. The kindled lips of inspired Genius must breathe over the benumbed soul before the colour of health will return, the baptismal flame be fanned into warmth, and the son of the Church be delivered to his Mother.

XXIII.—Philosophy and its Delights.

It was a remark of Bacon, that knowledge resembles a tree which runs straight for some time, and then parts itself into branches. Of these, Philosophy is one of the most verdurous, and throws the broadest shadow; whether we regard it in relation to spiritual truth, and call it Divine, or to the phenomena of the visible world, and distinguish it as Natural, or to the feelings and powers of Men, and show its restricted application by the title of Human, or Moral.

Philosophy comes into this Discourse under its single aspect of lighting and adorning the thoughts. It is only Wisdom, with the girdle of Beauty, that belongs to our subject. Speculative theories are [illegible] *in their* barren splendour. Ingenious researches,

which obtain the name of Metaphysical, offer few lasting rewards. Exploring expeditions into the mind generally bring back fabulous news of the interior. The perplexed journey is made by twilight, and the dim impressions of the traveller become obscurer in their transmission. He seldom sees an object with sufficient distinctness to describe it. The question remains undetermined, if Ideas be inborn, as one observer affirms, or fragments of broken sensations, as another supposes, or fine chains coiled up in the brain, as they appeared to the inquisitive eye of a third.

The student, therefore, who is enamoured of the graces of learning, turns to authors who entertain his eye and feed his fancy with the loveliest pictures and the richest fruit. For this reason he is never weary of reading particular passages in Plato; such as the allegory which compares the soul to a chariot with winged horses and a driver, and resolves its purest thoughts into remembrances of a brighter life in a nobler society. He learns a solemn and almost a Christian moral from the suggestion, that the soul of the philosopher will recover its lost grandeur the sooner, because, in a fallen and dark condition, it ever tries to recollect the things which higher Intelligences contemplate. An understanding, thus taught and illuminated, finds its eyesight cleared and strengthened. The earth on which it dwells is known to be Eden under a mist; in the common flower of the hedge, in the painted clouds, and in the sunshine upon grass, it reads intimations of a better country,—

"Of all that is most beauteous, imaged there
In happier beauty; more pellucid streams,
An ampler ether, a diviner air,
And fields invested with purpureal gleams."

Such a student is greatly charmed by the manner in which wisdom is communicated. Gilpin compared a true philosophical style to light from a north window, strong but clear. The colourless depth of the Greek has the transparent freshness, without being cold; often a ray of exquisite imagination seems to dart through it, and leave a lustre and warmth. To the latest hour of his life, Plato polished and adjusted his illustrations and argument; in the significant commentary of an early critic, combing and curling, and weaving and unweaving his writings after a variety of fashions.

Our own literature contains many lofty and serious views of the mysteries of man's nature. In these the student may

"At intervals descry
Gleams of the glory, streaks of flowing light,
Openings of heaven."

Cudworth may be studied with pleasure and profit for the frequent majesty of his sentiments; Henry More, for the wild strains of a tender and musical fancy; Norris, for a serious Platonism, brightened by a heavenlier sunshine; and Berkeley, for unequalled grace and harmony of manner. The system of Wollaston is fearfully mutilated on one side, but his moral dignity and deep sense of immortality lend impression to his teaching. It is unnecessary to speak of Butler, who, in the walk which he chose, is as incomparable as Hooker.

Philosophical studies are beset by one peril,—a person easily brings himself to think that he thinks; and a smattering of science encourages conceit. He is above his companions. A hieroglyphic is a spell. The Gnostic dogma is Cuneiform writing to the million. Moreover, the vain man is generally a doubter. It is a Newton who sees himself in a child on the seashore, and his discoveries in the coloured shells. A little knowledge leads a mind from God. Unripe thinkers use their learning to authenticate their doubts; while unbelief has its own dogma, more peremptory than the inquisitor's. Patient meditation brings the scholar back to humbleness. He learns that the grandest truths appear slowly. They are like the shapes of cloudy light, floating in the uttermost loneliness of space; some the naked eye discerns, others a common glass brings into view. But it was the enormous Reflector of modern skill, in the purity of a Southern atmosphere, that gave to those masses of vapour a form and a look of glory, and kindled strips of mist into rays of exquisite lustre. Thus, the cloud of the weak becomes the star-cluster of the strengthened sight. Many radiant bodies yet remain in their majestic retirements. No glass, however endowed with vision, compels these shadows to come within its range, and to show their faces. Still there is hope. The discovery of one star is the promise of another. The hand of Science grows more cunning every day, and its eye endures a stronger blaze. This is the lesson for the inquirer into the far-off and dim things of Truth. Hour by hour some eyes

are opened more and more by the Father of Lights, to behold the wondrous things of His Law. Nothing is too remote or misty for the straining and waiting gaze. The awfullest mysteries seem to be drawn nearer, and to glimmer from behind the veil.

XXIV.—The Study of Languages.

Fleury, after excepting Latin, Italian, and Spanish, for general readers, and Greek and Hebrew for ecclesiastics, includes foreign languages among the curiosities of literature. In English he found no advantage to compensate a learner for its difficulty. Selden puts the relative value of ancient and modern tongues with much archness, in comparing a person who quotes a Dutch, when a classical author might be used, to a guest leaving a party of scholars to solicit a testimonial from the kitchen.

The judgment of Fleury may fairly be questioned, but his omission of Oriental languages will not be disapproved. These mines are worked at enormous cost, and the returns are small. If Johnson's pension had come twenty years earlier, it would hardly have profited mankind in sending him, according to his wish, to Constantinople to learn Arabic. The rarity of such acquirements imparts a fictitious importance. We regard a person who speaks Chinese fluently, as we might look at a traveller accustomed to take his morning walk along the Great Wall. A shadow from the Pyramids falls over Champollion.

Languages are voices of a nation's mind. The mountain Greek has no tone of the soft Ionic. The Anglo-Saxon casts abroad in its short, stern, and solemn words, the awfulness of the forests where it grew. Italian is the love-talk of the Roman without his armour. A most curious instance of a language shaped by climate is seen in the South Sea Islands; and we are told that whole chapters of the New Testament in these languages contain no words ending with consonants, except the proper names of the original.

Of course every new language is a new instrument of power. It was finely said by Bacon, that God has formed the mind of man like a mirror, capable of receiving the image of the whole world, the variety of things, and the changes of time. He, therefore, whose knowledge spreads into the amplest circle, possesses the largest glass. Each added acquirement is a shade melted from the surface. Every fresh dialect is a new picture brought under the eye. But no riches are without inconveniences. Reflections of various objects overrun and confuse one another. The men of many tongues corrupt the idioms of their own, by catching the accent of their companions. Dryden attributed most of Cowley's defects to his continental associations, and said that his losses at home over-balanced his gains from abroad. That hideous German-English, which infects our modern literature, may be thought to confirm the remark.

Another apprehension rises. The time which is devoted to a foreign writer must obviously be

taken from a native. Some sense of sacrifice is felt in abandoning the fallen angel of Milton, with his face of "princely counsel,"—

"Majestic though in ruins,"

for the demon of Tasso, and his long tail; Shakspere ought to be nearly got by heart, before a summer afternoon is spent with Alfieri;—and the theologian should enjoy very long days of study who leaves Farindon upon the shelf, to muse over Segneri. What glorious poetry and prose must Schlegel have neglected, while he read with lingering eyes all the forgotten verses of Boccaccio!

The first duty of a reader is to study the learning and intellect of his own country. Our English granaries will feed a long life. Bacon magnified "letters, which, as ships, pass through the vast sea of Time," and spread the learning and lights of one age over another. And we may carry out his illustration in the noble boast of the poet Young, that Bacon himself, and Newton, and Shakspere, and Milton, have showed us how all the winds cannot blow a British ship further, than true Genius conveys British glory. These heroic names of Wisdom and Fancy go round the world, while every foreign rival strikes its flag as they pass.

Literature has pleasures like those of Travel. No landscape preserves its bloom and colour out of its own light and air. It looks languid and dusty in a description. It must be visited to be enjoyed. The remark is not inapplicable to authors. Cer*tainly no* translation of a true poem can retain the *beauty. It is* a landscape transferred to the wood-

outline, and grouping, and features may be preserved, but colour and life escape. By what process of skill can the copyist present, in their full splendour, the epithets of St. Paul, the silvery lights of Livy, or the picture-words of Æschylus? The weather-stains of Dante disappear in the modern fabric. The bloom of Petrarch melts under the touch. The polish rubs off from Massillon and Racine, and the crowded thoughtfulness of Pascal is scattered.

Another obstacle may be noticed to the success of the carefullest version,—a home-feeling generally injures the truth of a description. I am taught by the pencil-sketch of Twickenham, which Pope drew in the fly-leaf of his Homer. The trim grass-plot runs up to the door of Hector. The character of a poem and a history suffers from the same cause—the complexion and the garb are no longer national. Cato addresses the senate in a wig, and Æneas, on the arm of Dryden, has the lounge of the Mall.

XXV.—Domestic Interiors of Learning and Taste.

The Persian poet Saadi framed a lesson in a pleasant apologue. Two friends spent a summer day in a garden of roses; one contented himself with the colours and fragrance, the other gathered the *choicest bloom*, and carried it to his family. The

happy home-life of genius is the moral of the story. Of many sons of learning it might be written :—

"Oh, bliss, when all in circle drawn
About him, heart and ear were fed,
To hear him, as he lay and read
The Tuscan poets on the lawn."

We overlook Richardson reading a chapter of a new novel to a select circle in his grotto; and Sterne never wears so attractive an expression as by his own fireside, while his daughter makes a fair manuscript, and his wife is busy with her needle. "I am scribbling away," he tells a friend, "at my *Tristram*; these two volumes are, I think, the best I shall write as long as I live. My Lydia helps to copy for me, and my wife knits and listens as I read her chapters."

The poetic hearth of Weston, with the sofa and the warm curtains, and the adventures of the traveller by land or water,

"By one made vocal
For the amusement of the rest,"

recalls the visitor who put the rose-leaves in his bosom. Nor should we forget Milton inviting a friend to waste a sullen day by the fire, cheered by a

"Neat repast
Of Attic taste with wine, whence we may rise
To hear the lute well touch'd, or artful voice
Warble immortal notes and Tuscan air."

We breathe the Persian's rose again in Titian's garden-suppers, when the soft voices and instruments of Venetian ladies sounded from a thousand gondolas, gliding past in the moonlight.

A familiar letter of Pliny opens the domestic in-

terior of a scholar seventeen hundred years ago. He was stirring with the dawn, and thinking gloom favourable to meditation, he had his chamber darkened. Such opposite tempers as Malebranche, Hobbes, Corneille, and Sidney, seem to have shared this partiality. The morning was Pliny's season of composition. Having arranged his subject, he called his secretary, who wrote from his dictation. A saunter on the terrace, or beneath a covered portico, and a short carriage-drive, heightened his enjoyment of a siesta; afterwards he took a longer walk, which he improved by repeating a Greek or Latin speech. Supper concluded the day with a book, music, or an interlude.

We have a graceful example in a poet who borrowed Pliny's language. Petrarch lived in the rose-garden. His was the day of the true scholar, who found in Vaucluse a hermitage of fancy. Often he spent the hours from early morning in unbroken meditation, going forth to his work of taste until the evening. At other times his humour was rural, and he wandered among the leafy woods, while his shadow lengthened in the moonlight. Occasionally he gave himself up to waking visions by the water-side, to the tranquil idleness of fishing, or to the culture of his orchard. A dog was his watchful companion. It lay at his bedroom door, rousing him by a sharp rap of the paw when he overslept himself, and the day promised a cheerful excursion. The moment the poet appeared, his dog led the way to the familiar haunts, brisk with joy, and continually turning its eyes backward. The rugged fisherman

and his withered wife, who composed Petrarch's domestic establishment, would have received small satisfaction from the richest rose-leaves he gathered; but to his own vivid sense of sweetness no odour was lost. And doubtless he had days of solitary happiness, when the Muse brought him presents, not less delightful, if less real, than the Homer which he received from the Byzantine ambassador, and placed in rapturous admiration by the side of Plato.

It might be agreeable to look for versions of Saadi's apologue in the studio of the artist; to observe Rubens consecrating his daily occupations with a devotional temper, surrounded by the finest works of ancient genius, and nourishing his imagination by passages from Livy, Virgil, and Plutarch, which an attendant read to him as he painted. But I turn to portraits more serious and interesting. Jewell rose at four o'clock to prayers, and attended the public service in the cathedral at six. The remainder of the morning he gave to study. At meal-time, a chapter having been read, he amused himself by listening to scholastic arguments between young scholars, whom he entertained at his table. Then his doors and ears were open to all causes. About nine in the evening he called his servants to an account of the day, and admonished them accordingly: "From this examination to his study (how long it is uncertain, oftentimes after midnight), and so to bed; wherein, after some part of an author read to him by the gentleman of his bed-chamber, commending *himself* to the protection of his Saviour, he took his rest."

Good Bishop Hall has furnished a sketch of his own studious life in a letter to Lord Denny. No trait is wanting to complete it. Like his famous contemporary, he was up in summer with the bird that first rises, and in winter often before the sound of any bell. His waking thoughts were given to Him who made the cloud for rest and the sunshine for toil. While his body was being clothed, he set in order the labours of the day, and entering his study besought a blessing for them upon his knees. His words are :—" Sometimes I put myself to school to one of those ancients whom the Church hath honoured with the name of Fathers ; sometimes to those later doctors, who want nothing but age to make them classical ; always to God's Book." The season of family devotion was now come, and, this duty heartily fulfilled, he returned to his private reading. One while, as he tells us, his eyes were busied, and then his hands, or contemplation took the burden from both ; textual divinity employed one hour, controversy another, history a third ; and in short intervals of pensive talk with his thoughts, he wound up the scattered threads of learned research for future use. Thus he wore out the calm morning and afternoon, making music with changes.

At length a monitor interrupted him. His weak body grew weary. Before and after meals he let himself loose from scholarship. Then company, discourse, and amusement, were welcome. These prepared him for a simple repast, from which he rose capable of more, though not desirous. No book followed his late trencher. The discoveries and

thoughts of the day were diligently recollected, with all the doings of hand and mouth since morning. As the night drew near he shut up his mind, comparing himself to a tradesman who takes in his wares, and closes his windows in the evening. He said that the student lives miserably who lies down, like a camel, under a full burden. And so, calling his family together, he ended the day with God, and took his rest, and rose up again, for He sustained him.

Our own century supplies a companion picture. The literary life of Southey was the rose-garden in the pleasantest reading of the allegory. He has recorded the various occupations of the day, and seldom were more learned fancies and religious hopes collected into the space that comes

"Between the lark's note and the nightingale's."

Three pages of history—equal to five of a quarto—were his morning task after breakfast; transcribing, copying for the press, biographical collections, or what else suited his humour, filled up the gaps of leisure until dinner-time. Then a different kind of toil relieved him. He read, wrote letters, saw the newspapers, indulged in a short slumber—for sleep, in his agreeable confession, agreed with his constitution. Tea introduced poetry, and Thalaba or Kehema underwent new trials, or exhibited more wonderful magic. Supper wound up the chain of thought, to strike the hours of another day with the *same* regularity. And animating all his work is seen a *happy*, Christian spirit, ever bringing the future *into the present*, and sunning itself, by anticipation,

in the lights of a brighter communion. Most touching are his words:—"When I cease to be cheerful, it is only to become contemplative—to feel at times a wish that I was in that state of existence which passes not away; and this always ends in a new impulse to proceed, that I may leave some durable monument and some efficient good behind me."

Hitherto we have been gazing into the chamber of the scholar, and the dreamer of magnificent dreams; but the cottage-window ought to show an interior of beauty after its kind. There is no reason why the brown hand of labour should not hold Thomson, as well as the sickle. Ornamental reading shelters and even strengthens the growth of what is merely useful. A corn-field never returns a poorer crop because a few wild-flowers bloom in the hedge. The refinement of the poor is the triumph of Christian civilization.

It is growing. And now along the village-street, or in the lone dwelling to which the green lane winds, we often see the pleasing picture realized. The lending library brings the good man's life, the traveller's danger, or the martyr's victory, to the winter hearth, and the garden-seat in summer. Sweeter sights than these cheer our eyes—

"With due respect and joy
I trace the matron at her loved employ;
What time the striplings, wearied e'en with play,
Part at the closing of the summer's day,
And each by different path returns the well-known way.
Then I behold her at her cottage-door,
Frugal of light; her Bible laid before,
When on her double duty she proceeds,
Of time as frugal, knitting as she reads;

Her idle neighbours, who approach to tell
Some trifling tale, her serious looks compel
To hear reluctant—while the lads who pass,
In pure respect, walk silent on the grass."

A story is told of a Roman who expended vast sums in purchasing a household of learned slaves. He wished to have the best poets and historians in living editions. One servant recited the whole of the *Iliad;* another chanted the Odes of Pindar. Every standard author had a representative. The free Press has replaced the bondman. Literature is no longer an heirloom, nor can an emperor monopolize Horace. A small outlay obtains a choicer collection of verses than the ancient amateur enjoyed, and without the annoyances to which he was subject. He had no familiar book for a corner, nor any portable poet to be a companion in a field-walk, or under a tree. Not even Nero could compress a slave into an Elzevir. Moreover, disappointments sometimes occurred. Perhaps the deputy "Pindar" was out of the way; or a sudden indisposition of "Homer" interrupted Ulysses in the middle of an harangue, and left Hector stretching out his arms to the child.

XXVI.—Accountableness of Authors.

Few objects are more impressive than a large library by moonlight. The deep stillness, the glimmering books, and the lighted shadows upon the floor, affect the mind with a strange solemnity—

"At the midnight hour,
Slow through that studious gloom the pausing eye,
Led by the glimmering taper, moves around
The sacred volumes of the dead."

The student puts his hand upon a volume, the legacy of a shining and depraved genius, with a mournful remembrance of the words once uttered in the high-priest's palace. In a very different sense the speech betrays the writer. The sneer, the insult, and the licence, are idioms of the dark kingdom. How contemporaries flattered and successors magnify the author! His vices were weaknesses—the waste splendour of a full mind. The chisel has touched the stone into his image. His portraits hang in noble galleries; engravings tempt the eye in shop-windows; a thousand pages of panegyric build his epitaph. Presently the whole life and works of the departed man rise clearly before the musing eye, and the Hand that scared the Babylonian seems to flash along the shadowy wall, and the letters of fire to start forth—

"By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

No homage to the false charity of the age, nor any fear of its blame, should benumb this instinct of sorrowful apprehension. I am not speaking of the sinfulness which Chaucer and Boccaccio bewailed, and Dryden at least acknowledged; but of that wilful and consistent impiety of which Biography offers appalling illustrations. Hume, mocking Heaven upon his dying pillow, rushed headlong, with Lucian's ribaldry on his lips, into the dreadful presence of the Judge; and eyes that weep at a

tragedy have no tears of blood for the saddest ever beheld.

Southey was disappointed in being refused admission into Gibbon's garden. But what concern has a Christian with the chamber where Messalina wantoned, or the study in which Aretine blasphemed? Intellectual guilt is to be punished with severity proportioned to its turpitude and destructiveness. A book is even more than the life treasured up which Milton considered it to be. It is the soul disengaged from matter. It is a fountain that flows for ever. What should be done to the man who lavished his fortune in naturalizing a fever, and organized a system of propagating the plague through the post-office? The execration of the world would drive him into the wilderness. Yet it may well be thought that a man had better be defiled in his blood, than in his principles.

It has been conjectured, by more than one grand and stern thinker, that a departed spirit may retain a living sympathy with the evil fame and influence of its earthly career, and receive intimations of the corrupting and enduring might of Genius in a succession of direful shocks; every quickening of the pulse and clouding of the faith by a voluptuous, or a sceptical book, darting a pang of intolerable agony into the author's heart. Under this affecting view of the accountableness of literature, we may look upon each betrayal to vice and unbelief as a dismal episode of spiritual torment; upon each deathbed of crime, first taught and cherished by the *ministry* of the pen, as a sharper sting given to the

worm; and upon fathers and mothers' sighs over lost children, as so many gusts to freshen the flame and the anguish of the Middle State.

An interesting record of a great writer, lately withdrawn from this earth, has been recorded by a friend:—"The last time I saw Mr. Wordsworth, he was in deep domestic sorrow, and beginning to bend under the infirmities of old age. 'Whatever,' he said, 'the world may think of me or of my poetry is now of little consequence; but one thing is a comfort of my old age, that none of my works, written since the days of my early youth, contains a line I should wish to blot out because it panders to the baser passions of our nature. This,' said he, 'is a comfort to me; I can do no mischief by my works when I am gone.'"

Books, of which the principles are diseased or deformed, must be kept on the shelf of the scholar, as the man of science preserves monsters in glasses. They belong to the study of the mind's morbid anatomy, and ought to be accurately labelled. Voltaire will still be a wit, notwithstanding he is a scoffer; and we may admire the brilliant spots and eyes of the viper, if we acknowledge its venom and call it a reptile.

But the truth must be spoken—and for such offendors what rebuke is too stern? These are they whose activity of evil grows with their fame; who, red all over with the blood of souls in life, do murder even in their graves. If the servant, who hid his talent in the ground, was driven from his Master's presence into misery, what reward may he look for

who puts out his treasure with the dark exchanger, and traffics in all the merchandise of sin? That author alone fulfills his calling to whom, in some degree, a friend's panegyric of Addison may be applied —that his compositions are but a preface, published on earth, to that grander work of his death which is to be read in heaven.

The accountableness of authors has been enforced; but there is likewise a responsibility of readers. The deep reflection of Davenant admits of a larger application,—"The plays of children are punished; the plays of men are excused under the title of business." Readers, whose life is one long task-work of idleness, may recollect that time is religious money, certain at a future period to be called in; and that a sleepless Eye is keeping the account. The column of debt will show an alarming balance, when the outrages of Eugène Sue, and the politer wickedness of the French lady who calls herself a man, are seen to have absorbed the hours, or even the leisure of a week.

Feminine education is beyond the boundary of this Discourse. Yet surely the mission of Woman demands a higher teaching than modern instruction usually affords. It is an adjustment of mechanism rather than a shaping of mind. One might imagine that the ultimate aim and result of her creation were to be realised, in the pursuit of some flying composer of visionary swiftness; in pasturing uncomfortable cows upon thirsty fields of red chalk; or exhibiting the Great Mogul scowling frightfully in worsted. [redacted] *this respect* the nineteenth century will gain little

applause by a parallel with the sixteenth; when the brightest eyes were familiar with Greek as now with Rossini; and a Latin letter to Ascham about Plato was run off with the fluent grace of an invitation to a wedding. Some thinkers will perceive in those decorations of the mind a lasting fascination, not always found in later accomplishments, and consider them more likely to win unquiet hearts from wandering and turmoil—

> "To fireside happiness and hours of ease,
> Blest with that charm—the certainty to please."

XXVII.—The cultivated Mind and the uninformed.

It was a happy thought to compare a mind, enriched by reading and reflection, to a room in which a person talks with a beautiful woman, among the balmy lights of a summer evening; and to see the image of a mind, neglected and rude, in the same apartment, when the sun is set and the lovely occupant has gone away. The man of taste and learning recognizes himself in a figure. The cheering presence of Beauty and the magical effects of colour are continually within him; while Ignorance sits dark and lonely, till education opens its eyes to the flush of radiance, and unlocks its ears to the wise charming of the Charmer,—

> "The sweetest Lady of the time,
> Well worthy of the golden prime."

The pleasure is within the reach of all true seekers. The common flower does not grow by the cottage-

door more joyfully in the sun and rain. Mirandula mentions a plant whose leaf, taking a strong hold of the earth, shoots up into flourishing branches. The fiction of the Italian seems to be an emblem of Knowledge. A winter evening thoughtfully employed may be the leaf, that, striking its root downward and spreading upward, will be covered all over with boughs and fruit. A day opens into a week, a week blossoms into a month, until the persevering learner is embowered and refreshed by the foliage and the clusters of a year. Every fresh acquirement is another remedy against affliction and time. The sick soul possesses a holier hospital for its fever, or its wounds; but Literature is often a portico, or outer chamber; and Homer prepared a costly elixir, when he showed Minerva concealing the wrinkles of Ulysses.

A good book has been likened to a well-chosen orchard tree, carefully tended. Its fruits are not of one season. Year by year it yields abundant produce, and often of a richer hue and flavour. Blanco White, reading Tasso after thirty years of neglect, gives cheering testimony:—"If I open the treasures of Literature which nourished my mind in youth, I feel young again, and my mind seems to be transported into the regions of love and beauty, which I can now better enjoy than during the fever of the passions."

Perhaps the calmer industry of the matured taste helps it to find the hidden fragrance. Many flowers —*gay* and flaunting—the commonest insects may *rifle; but only the* bee's tongue reaches the honey

when it lies in a long tube. Moreover, the toil of the bee is always tranquil; its hum ceases over the blossom. From numberless books the fluttering reader—idle and inconstant—bears away the bloom that only clings to the outer leaf; but Genius has its nectaries, delicate glands, and secresies of sweetness,—and upon these the thoughtful mind must settle in its labour, before the choice perfume of fancy and wisdom is drawn forth.

The truest blessing of Literature is found in the inward light and peace which it bestows. Bentley advised his nephew never to read a book that he could not quote; as if the thrush in the May leaves did not contradict the caution. The music of wisdom is in the heart.

And this sequestered spirit of meditative enjoyment is recognized in much of our early Fancy and Learning. D'Israeli indicates a certain alarm at the Printing Press. The publisher of England's *Helicon* pasted slips over the names of the contributors. Sidney wrote the *Arcadia* for the woods of Wilton. Sackville's Induction to the *Mirror for Magistrates* was sent abroad unacknowledged.

A sincere lover of Literature loves it for itself alone; and it rewards his affection. He is sheltered as in a fortress. Whatever troubles and sorrows may besiege him outside, his well of water, his corn, and his wine, are safe within the walls. The world is shut out. Even in the tumult of great affairs he is undisturbed. Dr. Harvey, the discoverer of the circulation of the blood, had the two young princes *entrusted to his* care at the battle of Edgehill; having

withdrawn them to a short distance from the fight, he sat down under a hedge, and taking a book from his pocket, quietly perused it, until a ball from a gun grazed the ground close by, and obliged him to retire.

An affecting instance of the tenderness and the compensations of Learning is furnished by the old age of Usher, when no spectacles could help his failing sight, and a book was dark except beneath the strongest light of the window. Hopeful and resigned he continued his task, following the sun from room to room through the house he lived in, until the shadows of the trees disappeared from the grass, and the day was gone. How strange and delightful must have been his feelings, when the sunbeam fell brilliantly upon some half-remembered passage, and thought after thought shone out from the misty words, like the features of a familiar landscape in a clearing fog.

Pleasant it would be for us, in our gloomier hours of time and sadness, if we might imitate that Indian bird which, enjoying the sunshine all the day, secures a faint reflection of it in the night, by sticking glow-worms over the walls of its nest. And something of this light is obtained from the books read in youth, to be remembered in age—

"And summer's green all girded up in sheaves."

Coleridge said that the scenes of his childhood were so deeply written on his mind, that when upon a still, shining day of summer he shut his eyes, the *river* Otter ran murmuring down the room, with the

soft tints of its waters, the crossing plank, the willows on the margin, and the coloured sands of its bed. The lover of books has memories, also, not less sweet or dear. Having drunk of the pure springs of Intellect in his childhood, he will continue to quench his thirst from them in the heat, the burden, and the decline of the day. The corrupted streams of popular entertainment flow by him unregarded. He lives among the society of an elder age. Tasteful Learning he numbers with the chiefest blessings of his home; when clasping the hand of Religion, it becomes its Vassal and its Friend. By this union he obtains the watchfulness and the guidance of two companions, loving and beloved, who redouble his delights in health, bring flowers to his pillow in sickness, and shed the lustre and the peace of the Past and the Future over the blackness and the consternation of the Present.

THE END.

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Lyrics,—little sheaves, we might call them, from the abundant harvest, possessing the true colour and the choice flavour of the ripest sun and the most genial soil. A volume may be pleasantly gathered from these writers, to which some remarks on their histories and minds should be added. "I once thought," Mr. Coleridge said, "of making a collection, to be called The Poetical Filter." His plan was to omit those parts of a composition in which the bad taste of the author, or the fashion of the age, prevailed over his genius; and by this simple operation he expected to make "a great number of exquisite *wholes*." I shall endeavour to use the Filter with more reserve. A poem stained by the vices of its age will be erased altogether. We have no right to paint out the accessories of Titian; though we may remove his picture from the gallery. Shall we strip Bacon's statue of its slashed hose? The quaintness of an author is the dress of his mind.

The principle of selecting poems will be carried into later years. The time is come for clearing the threshing-floor. Every day the line of the Moralist is truer:—

> "Half our knowledge we must snatch, not take."

Productions of real beauty are buried among others of no interest or value. The rubbish should be carted away and sifted, that these fragments of fine pottery may be rescued and preserved. It was the choosing and the polishing hand of Pope that placed on every book-shelf the verses of PARNELL. Cowley may have been over-bold in wishing to prune and lop off the luxuriance of SHAKESPERE and his contemporaries; but we shall surely agree with him in considering a

little tomb of marble to be a better monument than a great heap of stones.

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BULWER LYTTON AND HIS WORKS.

It is not till after the death of an author that any attempt to compose his biography, or to detail the effect produced by circumstance and event on his intellectual development and literary career, can be successfully made—save by the author himself. And in the following notice we content ourselves with such references to the life of the writer, as may serve to illustrate the general character of his works.

Edward Bulwer Lytton is the third and youngest son of the late William Earle Bulwer, of Heydon Hall and Wood Dalling, Norfolk, brigadier-general, one of the four commanding officers to whom the internal defence of England, at the time of the anticipated invasion by Napoleon, was entrusted,—and of Elizabeth, sole heiress and representative of the Lyttons of Knebworth, Herts. His two brothers are both living; the eldest (William) inherited the paternal estates in Norfolk, and enjoys in private life the reputation of an excellent landlord, and an accomplished gentleman. The second, who derived from his grandmother a considerable fortune, is the distinguished diplomatist Sir Henry Bulwer, successively Minister Plenipotentiary in Spain, the United States, and the Court of Tuscany, Privy Councillor, and Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath.*

The name of Bulwer attests the Scandinavian origin of the family

* Author of two able works upon France, as well as of an earlier, and indeed very youthful publication, called "*An Autumn in Greece*," and of a political pamphlet in favour of the Whigs, which was highly successful at the time. He sat in Parliament for some years; first for Coventry, next for Marylebone. His speeches, especially on foreign affairs, evinced much thought and information. He resigned his seat on accepting the post of Secretary of Embassy at Constantinople, and conducted with remarkable ability the negotiations for our commercial *treaty with the* Porte.

by which it is borne. No patronymic can more unequivocally express descent from those daring races of the Baltic, which, whether under the title of Dane or Norman, exercised so large an influence over the early history and progressive civilization of Great Britain. In its ancient orthography, Bölver, or Bulver, it is one of the war titles of Odin; it is the name also borne by one of the most famous of the Scandinavian Scalds, or warrior-bards; and the place at which the first of the name landed in England is still called Bulverhithe. Bloomfield, in his "*History of Norfolk*," traces the settlement of the Bulwers in that county to the date of the Conquest, when the lands of Wood Dalling (still in possession of the family) were assigned to Turold Bulver by Aymer de Valence.

The family of Lytton originally settled in Lytton, Derbyshire, and Congleton, Cheshire, and were possessed of great wealth and power from the earliest periods of our history. They furnished Crusaders at Acre under Richard Cœur de Lion; they took active part in the wars of the Roses, and held high military and civil appointments under the Lancastrian and Tudor kings. Sir Robert de Lytton, Knight of the Bath, the first possessor of Knebworth (which had once been a royal fort and appanage), was Privy Councillor, Keeper of the Great Wardrobe, and Under-treasurer of England to Henry VII. His descendant, Sir Rowland, married a cousin of Queen Elizabeth, daughter of Oliver, first Lord St. John, of Bletsoe,—was Captain of the band of Gentlemen Pensioners, Lieutenant of Essex and Herts, and commanded the forces of those counties at the camp of Tilbury. If we turn to Burke's "*Genealogies*" and "*Royal Descents*," we find that the alliances of this family, and that of Norreys-Robinson, of Monaodhu (Anglesey), and Guersylt, Denbighshire, of which Elizabeth Lytton was also sole representative, were not only with some of the most illustrious of our great baronial houses, but with the lineal descendants of the Plantagenets and Tudors. It is possible that the early associations connected with an origin thus singularly patrician, may have influenced the writings of our author—have given to them that tone of chivalry, and that veneration for antiquity, which pervade their sentiment and descriptions; but it is certainly just to add, that no writer ever did more to assert the nobility of mind over that of race, or has more boldly contrasted the lofty claims of living intellect and worth with the meaner aristocracy that founds its pretensions solely upon the wealth and the honours inherited from the dead.

General Bulwer died while Edward was yet an infant. The care of our Author's education devolved upon his mother, to whose virtues and acquirements he has often alluded with grateful pathos. To her he dedicated the first collected edition of his works, in 1840; and thus

writes in that touching inscription: "From your graceful and accomplished taste I early learned that affection for literature which has exercised so large an influence over the pursuits of my life, and you who were my first guide were my earliest critic. . . . Never more than at this moment did I wish that my writings were possessed of a merit which might outlive my time, so that at least these lines might remain a record of the excellence of the mother, and the gratitude of the son."

After passing through one or two preparatory schools, Edward was placed with Dr. Hooker, of Rottindean, near Brighton, whose academy was in great repute at that day. Here, we have heard from one of his school-contemporaries, that though the quickness and vigour of his abilities were universally recognized, he was chiefly remarkable for eagerness and energy in all boyish sports, for determined courage, which would not brook a blow or affront from any boy, however superior to himself in years and size, and for a personal activity and strength which seemed at variance with a frame always slight, and a health always delicate. On leaving Dr. Hooker's he continued his education under the tuition, first, of the Rev. C. Wallington at Ealing, and next, more expressly for the purpose of studying the Mathematical sciences, under the Rev. H. Thomson, of St. Lawrence, near Ramsgate.

He went to the university of Cambridge at an earlier age than usual; was entered first at Trinity College, but only remained there one term; after which he removed to Trinity Hall. He soon chose his acquaintance amongst the most distinguished of his collegiate contemporaries; but the eagerness with which he entered into the discussions at the famous Union Debating Society, and into all subjects of general literary and philosophical inquiry, seems to have distracted him from the formal routine of university studies, and prevented (with the one exception we shall presently refer to) his trying for academical honours; the loss of an occasion which he has been often heard to regret. He became, however, highly distinguished, more especially for historical information, at the Union Society—of which he was unanimously elected President—and quitted the University, after taking the ordinary degree of B.A., with the general reputation for scholarship, energy, and talent, which already marked him as one of those men of whom, like the Audley Egerton of his own latest fiction, the experienced prophesy, "they will be something, some day." In the last year of his residence at the university, he had contested the gold medal for an English poem on "SCULPTURE;" the prize was decided in his favour after he had left, and he went up to the university to recite his poem in the Senate House. The poem made a considerable sensation at the time, from a boldness of style and variety of

illustration, in contrast with the formal monotony of that class c composition.

The love for action and adventure, which may be traced throughou his whole career, which had led him to spend the summer vacations c the university in pedestrian rambles over great portions of Englan and Scotland, even joining (if we rightly interpret a passage in one c his works), for a short time, the migrations of a Gipsy tribe,—no induced him to enter the army, as Cornet in a cavalry regiment. Bu we believe that he never actually joined, and his success in literatur shortly afterwards decided him to resign his commission, and pursu the "bubble reputation" at other mouths than the cannon's. Mean while, on leaving Cambridge, our author carried into the fashionabl circles of London life that talent for polished satire, and that faculty c acute observation, which are so remarkably displayed in "PELHAM. He afterwards resided some months in Paris—visited various parts c France—returned to England—published a small tale, in one volume called "FALKLAND," which he has since withdrawn from the list c his acknowledged publications, not from its defects as a literar composition (for it has passages of singular eloquence), but with th frank avowal that it was written at that crisis of thought and feelin common enough to the boyhood of early youth of all men of genius when all the elements of thought are unsettled, when crude impression are hastily received as truths, and in striving first to think for them selves, they question all the oracles of human fate, and dangerously interpret the ambiguous answers according to their own passionat inclinations. The work, however, gave the indication of rare promise which its publisher, Mr. Colburn, had the discernment to recognize He offered our young author 500*l.* for a novel in 3 vols. "I will giv you one that shall be sure to succeed," was the answer. At that tim the first volume of "PELHAM" was written; it had been founded on tale written in boyhood, as an essay in composition, and enlarged partly at college, partly at Paris. When, however, "PELHAM" wa completed and sent in to Mr. Colburn, the reader employed by tha publisher to report its merits, pronounced so unfavourable an opinio as to threaten the conclusion of the agreement. Fortunately, how ever, for all parties concerned, Mr. Colburn resolved to read the worl himself, and his own judgment, being backed by that of a literar friend, Mr. Charles Ollier, "PELHAM, OR THE ADVENTURES OF GENTLEMAN," was finally given to the public towards the close of th year 1828. It was some months before the work of an anonymou author found its way to the public; many of the earlier criticisms wer unfavourable to it. The *Examiner* and the *Literary Gazette* wer perhaps the first to distinguish and loudly to assert its wit, vigour originality, and the earnest irony, that lay underneath a sportiveness

which mocked the frivolities it assumed. It gradually became the rage; its effect, not only in England, but on the Continent, was such as to lay the foundation for that unsurpassed popularity which the writer has since obtained and increased.

"PELHAM" was rapidly followed up by the "DISOWNED" and "DEVEREUX," both of which bore evidence to the rich stores of thought and poetry, that the new author brought to bear upon fiction. Of these three works, "PELHAM" is at once the most finished as a narrative, the most vigorous in execution, and taking its exuberant wit and daring originality into account, it must be considered as the most decided indication of what is rather felt than defined by the word *genius*. But the "DISOWNED," with a more defective narrative and less sparkling diction, gives glimpses of a much loftier tone of mind, of greater capacities for pathos, of grander ideals of human character and the nobler aims of human life. Perhaps, as a contemporary critic truly remarked, a finer picture of the Christian Stoic than is given to us in the effigies of the principal hero in the "DISOWNED," Algernon Mordaunt, is not to be found in prose fiction; "DEVEREUX," on the other hand, is more complete and symmetrical as a narrative than either "PELHAM" or the "DISOWNED." The mystery that pervades the plot is admirably sustained, and is derived, not from the inferior sources of external incident, but the complicated secrets of the human heart. The key to the whole plot is in the true character of AUBREY, and our reason is satisfied not so much by the probability of the events, as by the consummate analysis of mind and motive by which the events themselves grow naturally and inevitably out of the idiosyncrasy of their agents: nor, apparently episodical as many of the scenes through which the narrative glides may appear to a superficial view—are they episodical in fact; all conduce to the development of the design with which the work was commenced. Nevertheless, "DEVEREUX" is inferior to its predecessors in the essential point of narrative interest, the style has less charm, the wit is more constrained than in "PELHAM," and the pathos is less touching and less elevated than that in the "DISOWNED."

Our author seems to have been aware, that in these three works he had exhausted one vein of his intellect. He paused a year, and struck into a shaft thoroughly fresh and virgin, to which he has never applied himself again. "PAUL CLIFFORD" is a work *sui generis*. It is a political and social satire worked out through the gravest agencies;—in form, a burlesque—in essentials, a tragedy. The outline of the original idea, may be found in Gay's "*Beggars' Opera*," and Fielding's "*Jonathan Wild*," viz., the ironical comparison between those whom society makes its idols, and those whom it outlaws from its pale. But both Fielding and Gay limit to this irony the scope of their

design. In both, the *serious* is excluded; there are no hints to redeem and reform the vices jestingly held up to our survey. The humour in these two masterpieces of travesty, admits no softening gleam or moral beauty; it is in what the author of "PAUL CLIFFORD" adds to the conception which he takes as his groundwork, that he establishes the originality of his work, and fixes its interest into the deepest more of the human heart. To the inferior characters of his tale his travesty is confined: these group from time to time round the more prominent characters as the chorus of the ancient drama, relieving the narrative, or pointing the moral, not serving to the actual *dénouement*. High above all burlesques upon the false shows of civilized life, all images of Peachums and Lockits, towers the grave and earnest figure of William Brandon. Paul Clifford, the hero, soon enlarges himself from the proportions of a Captain Macheath; he is not sportive food for gibbet, he is a human soul to be saved. "*Jonathan Wild*," and the "*Beggars' Opera*," are works admirably fitted to destroy hollow conventions and false idols. "PAUL CLIFFORD" goes beyond them in social philosophy, for it not only destroys, but it reconstructs. It is a satire upon Crime, and never more impressive as a satire than in its graver parts (as in the character and career of the cynical, sombre, unprincipled lawyer); but it is also a genial appeal to the conscience of communities, to adjust our codes to the reform of criminals, as well as to their punishment. Its purpose here is expressed in the witticism with which it closes, "The worst use to which you can put a man, is to hang him." Our author must often have smiled, whether in scorn or sadness, at the shallow criticisms which represented this work so full of a cordial philosophy, so marked by elevated benevolence, and so rounded into the very moral which all our statesmen have since laboured to shape into Acts of Parliament,—as a vicious representation of heroes and highwaymen.

After this bold and striking fiction, the author again paused for a year from prose composition, but he amused himself with throwing off a poetical *jeu d'esprit*, called the "SIAMESE TWINS." The result was a failure; its satire was not sufficiently broad to strike the public, and its graver merits were deformed by hasty versification. The experiment was unfortunate for his after-fame as a poet, since it prejudiced the press and the public against that fair and serious examination of his later efforts in poetry, which their subtlety and depth require. But appended to the "SIAMESE TWINS," was the beautiful poem of "MILTON" (since greatly enlarged and improved in the collected edition of Bulwer's poems), to the sweetness and elevation of which the *Edinburgh Review*, in condemning the inferior poem that accompanied it, did impartial and eloquent justice.

During a visit into Norfolk, our author's interest (as he informs us)

was excited by various traditional anecdotes of the Lynn schoolmaster, Eugene Aram. The contrast between a life passed in study, and peculiar for traits of gentleness and humanity, with the committal of one great and inexpiable crime, must naturally have impressed a writer so fond of exploring the most secret recesses of the human heart. To account for the contrast, and to prove the new and most useful moral, that the consciousness of one crime suffices to paralyze all healthful ambition, and render knowledge barren of all fruit, he commenced a work which must always rank high amongst the greatest he has produced. Hitherto, though the tragic element had been admitted into his fictions, it had never been elaborated into one consistent whole; hitherto, also, he had very sparingly applied to the improvement of narrative fiction those secrets of proportion and design by which the drama unites all the graduated links of interest, while concentrating its fullest power on those parts of its fable in which *action* is most called for, or *situation* most impressive. "EUGENE ARAM" attests an immense progress in the resources of art in fiction; it grasps the materials of terror and pity with a master's hand, and connects them with all the gradual progress of the drama, into tragic completeness; the characters are very few, and all gather round the fate of the fated hero, giving and reflecting interest. If we leave Eugene Aram for a moment to follow the adventures of Walter Leslie, still we feel insensibly that it is the secret of Aram we are unravelling, and toward his doom that we are hurried along. Power of description is also much more visible in this work than those which preceded it. Who that has read can ever forget the picture of the student in his lonely house, when Houseman comes at night to his door? or the tears of his long, untold remorse, when, sitting alone with Madeline, he sees the light stream from the windows of the village church? or the interview with his terrible accomplice in the gloomy cavern, and his ride home through the storm when the lightning flashes on the gibbet in his way? or Walter Leslie's discovery of the hidden bones? or the arrest of the hunted murderer on his marriage-day?

Conjointly with "EUGENE ARAM," was written the novel of "GODOLPHIN," first published anonymously. Though nothing could be more opposed in style and character than these two fictions, they were somewhat akin in their ethical design: for while "EUGENE ARAM" represents the effect of a single crime upon a magnificent intellect, "GODOLPHIN" represents the effect of commonplace pleasures upon a poetical temperament. In one there is the picture of a life blasted; in the other, the picture of a life frittered away. "GODOLPHIN" has less vigour, and less profundity than the best of the writer's fictions, but it has an exquisite grace of sentiment and a singular fascination of style. It contains, perhaps, too, on the whole, the most accurate of

all Bulwer's representations of that cold and glittering surface of society which the French entitle the *beau monde*, for in "PELHAM" whim and satire sometimes betray the young observation of the writer to the verge of humorous caricature; but in "GODOLPHIN" the polished portraitures have the repose and delicacy of Mignard and Lawrence. What, in its way, can be more finished and truthful than the description of the high-bred cynicism of Saville? or the elegant effeminacy into which the original genius of Godolphin himself subsides, as the indolence of the epicurean gradually prevails over his finer nature? Nor must we forget that the two heroines, Constance and Lucilla, are amongst the most consummate of Bulwer's female creations; the letter of the last to Godolphin, when she discovers his love for her lofty rival, has been justly extolled as a *chef d'œuvre* of delicacy and passionate tenderness. In this year, also, was composed one of the loveliest and most fanciful of this varied catalogue of fiction, viz., "THE PILGRIMS OF THE RHINE," published first with illustrations. Its great merits as a literary composition were long only partially recognized by our public. The enthusiasm it excited in Germany led ultimately to its appreciation in England. It seems, indeed, steeped in the very atmosphere of the scenes it describes; it gathers together, as into a garland of flowers, the associations, the history, the legends, the romance of the Rhine. Nothing like it, for the comprehension of the poetical aspects of places hallowed by tradition, exists in our language; and its originality is so toned down into familiar sweetness, that it is scarcely detected till we search for some work with which to compare it, and—find none. This period appears to have been the most occupied and laborious in our author's life. Besides the composition of these works, he was not only the editor, but main contributor to the *New Monthly Magazine;* he had entered Parliament, first, as M.P. for St. Ives, afterwards for the city of Lincoln, was taking an active part in its debates and business, was the chairman of the Committee for Inquiry into the State of the Drama, and a member of another committee, among the most important and laborious which were ever appointed, viz., that upon the Government of India, which preceded Lord Grey's India Bill; while simultaneously he was amassing the variety of information which he shortly afterwards developed in the brilliant essay upon "ENGLAND AND THE ENGLISH." An activity of mind so great had its natural effect upon the bodily health. Bulwer withdrew from the management of the *New Monthly*, which he had undertaken with a view of rendering it an important political and critical organ, and shortly after the publication of "ENGLAND AND THE ENGLISH," went for the first time into Italy. The groundwork of "RIENZI" was traced at Rome, but, as he tells us, after the completion of the first volume, and on removing to *Naples*, it was suspended in favour of "THE LAST DAYS OF POMPEII,"

which was published on his return to England, the following year. No fiction composed from classical materials ever met with equal popularity, or produced an equal sensation.

The main secret of this signal success may be found in the skill with which the author contrasts the description of manners entirely opposed to our own, by the exhibition of feelings with which we have most in common; the characters are thus relieved from that frigidity and stiffness which preceding authors have given to their resuscitation of shadows from the ancient world. They obey the impulse of the human heart, which in all ages is the same, and thus move with familiar ease under the folds of their classic garb. Written almost on the very site of the place, the erudition which the tale requires only serves to animate description, and enliven our interest by appeals to our curiosity. Perhaps here and there the colours revived on the walls of the dead are too much blended by the dictates of a modern taste; but on the whole there is a rare fidelity to the civilization of the place and age; fidelity produced by patient attention, not only to such details as classic authors have bequeathed to us, and which would not suffice to exhibit the manners—half Greek, half Roman—of a Campanian watering-place; but to all that can enlighten research, in the pages of Neapolitan antiquaries, in the remains collected in the *Museo Borbonio*, in the vestiges of the city itself, and in the analogies to the ancient race which the manners of the living people have preserved. This fidelity the minute learning of German scholars has not failed to recognize. In the progress of the story itself, the author has still more developed the dramatic element which he had first elaborately employed in the structure of "EUGENE ARAM." The plot commencing lightly with the gay descriptions of idle life, its baths and its banquets, deepens gradually towards the awful magnificence of the catastrophe. The close of the fourth book, as of a fourth act, with the contrasting song of the Epicurean Revellers, and the hymns of the Christian Chorus, that appear on the verge of the coming doom, is conceived and executed in a spirit of the deepest poetry. And all our passions are alternately "rocked as on a music scale" by the scene in the gladiatorial arena,—the inhuman delight of the spectators,—the first outburst of the irruption from the Mount of Fire,—the phenomena of the general destruction,—to the still unnoticed disappearance of Nydia, under the smile of awaking Dawn.

At this time, by the death of Earl Spenser, and the removal of Lord Althorpe from the leadership of the Commons to the Upper House, the Whig Government was broken up, and Sir Robert Peel was summoned from Rome to form a new administration. On these events, our author, then member for Lincoln, published the celebrated pamphlet called "THE CRISIS." No political pamphlet of our time has

produced so universal an effect, nor commanded so large a sale. At the comparatively high price of 3s. 6d. it ran through more than twenty editions in a few weeks. Afterwards, issued in a cheaper form, it became the manual for all the supporters of the Melbourne party at the ensuing general election, and was acknowledged by the Whigs, on their return to office, to have materially conduced to their parliamentary majority. On Lord Melbourne's reaccession to power, as prime minister, he offered to the writer who had thus served him one of the Lordships of the Admiralty, with complimentary apologies for having no higher post free at the moment, and assurances of rapid promotion. Though Bulwer's income was at that time mainly derived from his literary labours, he however declined the Premier's offer partly because he could not lower his own spirit of independence, by accepting what the public would naturally construe as a reward to the partisan for the service of the writer, and partly, no doubt, because literature proffered to him a more pleasing attraction, and a more permanent repute.

A year after the appearance of "THE LAST DAYS OF POMPEII," "RIENZI" was completed and published. It is in all respects the contrast in tone and in colour to "POMPEII." The early middle age of Italy rises before us; rude, yet struggling into light and seeking escape into civilization by return to the classic past; the grand soul of the "Last Tribune" comes to recall again, for a momentary interval, the majesty of antique Rome, startling, as with the ghost of the classic giantess, the barbarian courts of the victor North. Rienzi himself is the master-spirit of the whole. The author has differed from the view of the Tribune's character taken by Gibbon; but he has founded his own estimate upon careful research and logical deduction from historical data: with what accuracy the reader, on referring to the notes appended to the work, can judge. But the character, as given in the romance, impresses us with the feeling that the portraiture must, on the main, be true to the original; between its faults and its virtues there is an essential harmony; the whole form comes out life-like, as one of flesh and blood. Beside this baffled resuscitator of Classic law and Roman freedom stands, as large in its proportions and more ruthless in its strength, the representative of chivalry and violence,—the type of the middle age. Part troubadour, part monk, part lover, all soldier, the great image of Walter de Montreal, commands at once a reluctant affection and a secret dread. Most felicitous and most truthful to the genius of the age are the two scenes in which the Knight of St. John contrasts the two sides of his character, the tender and the fierce, viz. that in which he chants his love-song to his lady amidst the woodland scene, and that in which Adrian Co

lonna finds him stern and armed in his robber's camp,—the terrible chief of the Free Lances.

About this time Bulwer also composed, and shortly afterwards published, the slighter and briefer tale of "LEILA, OR THE CONQUEST OF GRENADA," to which was appended "CALDERON, OR THE COURTIER." Both these must be regarded as bold and rapid sketches, by a master-hand, rather than elaborate and finished performances of careful art.

The investigation of the past, to which our author's mind had been thus recently directed, appears to have influenced him in the prosecution of a design first cherished in the cloisters of Cambridge, viz. the "HISTORY OF THE RISE AND FALL OF ATHENS." Two volumes of this history were now given to the public. Of these we shall speak later, as well as of the Essays contained in "THE STUDENT," and the author's earliest attempt at the acted drama, "THE DUCHESSE DE LA VALLIERE."

To proceed with the series of prose fictions. Bulwer now turned into a new direction for materials. He laid aside the dramatic form of representing narrative, which had been so successful in "EUGENE ARAM," and "THE LAST DAYS OF POMPEII," and which had varied the more epic strain of "RIENZI," and, for the first time, made an experiment of what may be called *typical fiction*. Goethe, in "*The Apprenticeship of Wilhelm Meister*," had conveyed, in the adventures of a somewhat ordinary youth, the progress and accomplishment of poetic art. No doubt this work was in our author's mind when he undertook the story of "ERNEST MALTRAVERS;" and he probably designed to express his sense of what he here owed to the subtle genius of Goethe, and to intimate his consciousness that the interior, or æsthetical intention of his work, would be best understood in Germany when he dedicated the book to the German people. Ernest Maltravers, as our author has since taken occasion to show, is the type of the poetic intelligence, working out its highest ultimate destinies through the scenes and probation of actual life. Alice is not therefore introduced as the heroine of a mere love story. Alice, in reality, is the type of the Natural—of the untutored, simple Beautiful—unawakened as yet to the moral sense of vice or virtue—obeying its own instincts. The three other principal female characters are also types. Valerie de Ventadour is the fair show of worldly conventional grace, not devoid of good when fully comprehended on its better side, but weak against temptation, not capable of retaining permanent hold even on the senses, not satisfying the higher aspirations of the soul.

Again, that part of the story which connects Florence Lascelles with the career of Maltravers, represents to us that stage in the progress

of the poetic mind, when success and fame attract towards it the homage of the world,—when its alliance is courted by the rival potentates that rule over the surface of society, wit and beauty, and rank and wealth. Florence represents them all. But the affection is one-sided; the poet in the depth of his heart does not return it. Were the alliance consummated, his destinies would halt incomplete; the connection therefore ends in disappointment, deceit, and sorrow. The poet separates himself from the world; he confirms, but somewhat overhardens, his powers and affections in solitude and musing; a certain misanthropy grows out of disappointed benevolence. He reappears again before us in his maturer manhood. This is the second part (first published under the title of "ALICE, OR THE MYSTERIES"). He stands solitary in the home of his ancestors; and now his heart, long dormant, is roused and charmed by a new image. Evelyn Cameron is the ideal of virgin youth, inexperienced in its own emotions, liable to mistake its own wishes; it knows not yet the noble devotion of true passion; it stands apart in its fairy-land from the duties and aims of practical life. In what thus passes between Maltravers and Evelyn is represented that epoch in the poetic mind when, wearied with the actual world, the poet yearns for return to his early dreams, seeks to renew his own youth, and forgets that he cannot regain the former freshness, nor link inexperienced hope with the memory of errors, and the fulness of sorrowful knowledge. But the desire itself is a step in the right direction, though towards the wrong object. Disappointment awaits the probationer with Evelyn, as it had with Florence; and we now reach at once the *dénouement* of the ulterior design, in the reunion of Maltravers with Alice; that is to say, the restoration of art to nature,—but art perfected by long experience and severe trial, and nature awakened from its first ignorance, and kindled to the full sense of the moral good which lies beneath the Beautiful. Here, too, the ideal intelligence, long at war with the practical world, is reconciled to it. It embraces duty, not from compulsion, but as an essential to its happiness. The seeker after the Eleusinian Mysteries has passed through all the varied probations at the porch, and is fitted to become a teacher in the temple.

Such, judging from the hints given to us by the author himself in his various prefaces and in different parts of his work,* as well as from a

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* We may here state that in explaining the designs of Bulwer's fictions we have applied ourselves diligently to what he himself has said of them in notes or prefaces to their different editions, and have *not* scrupled at times to borrow his own words, though enlarging upon *the hints they* afford to us.

careful study of the fiction itself, appears to us the large though refining moral of "ERNEST MALTRAVERS." But the typical intentions are with admirable art kept so far subordinate to the story, that we always feel ourselves in the company of living agents; and it is only when our interest in the events of the tale and the destinies of its leading characters is fully satisfied, that we pause to look back at the secret philosophy that pervades the narrative, and become sensible of the wisdom we have acquired in the pleasure we have received. In the meanwhile, the comparative failure of the "DUCHESSE DE LA VALLIERE" on the stage,* and the general assertion among the critics that Bulwer could never succeed as a dramatist, only increased the resolution to succeed natural to the man with whom it is a favourite maxim that "failure is only advantage, if it make us more resolved on success." Mr. Macready had just undertaken the management of Covent Garden with the honourable design to restore the English drama. One evening the manager, speaking to Bulwer of his risks and fears, said, "Oh! if I could get a play like the *Honeymoon!*" In less than a fortnight from that evening the "LADY OF LYONS" was written, and in Macready's hands. It is unnecessary to speak of the extraordinary success which attended this play. It was produced without the name of the author. On the first night of the performance Bulwer was engaged upon a constitutional debate in the House of Commons, and after having spoken there with great success, went to the theatre just in time to see the curtain drop amidst the rapturous applause of the audience. It was about this time that, on the occasion of her present Majesty's coronation, Lord Melbourne recommended the selection of two representatives of science and letters for the honour of the baronetcy. Sir John Herschell was named by the Premier for the one, and Bulwer for the other. Bulwer had not then succeeded to the estates of his mother, and the representation of her ancient line. He accepted the title less as a compliment to himself than as a recognition of the claims of literature to place amongst the honours accorded to merit under monarchical institutions.

"NIGHT AND MORNING," was produced the following year. In this, as in "ERNEST MALTRAVERS," there is a typical intention, though of a broader and more universal nature. We do not here trace the rare career of a poetical intelligence, but of the masculine, hardy type of the common race of active men. Philip is no poet, no child of fastidious genius; he passes through no delicate phases of sentiment; he roughs his way through the world, and wins it by the aid of "time, faith, and energy." "NIGHT AND MORNING" has always been one of

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* Withdrawn by the author after a run of thirteen nights.

the most generally popular of the author's works; its materials are of a homelier and coarser kind than many of them; but their texture is strong, and their hues brilliant. And in proportion as the work dispenses with the more reflective beauties that distinguish "MALTRAVERS," it gains as an animated and powerful story of real life. This year, another signal and triumphant success on the stage, in the production of "RICHELIEU, OR THE CONSPIRACY," attested the fertility of Bulwer's genius, and extended the foundations of his fame.

Next followed "ZANONI," the last and finest of such of our author's prose fictions as are devoted to the illustration of external life by symbolical philosophy. As the key to the interior meaning of this remarkable work has been given by an eminent contemporary writer (we believe Miss Martineau), and will be found affixed to the work itself, it would be needless here to enlarge on it. "ZANONI" is perhaps less liked by the many than the generality of its companions, but it has especial admirers, who rank it above them all. Independently of the depth and richness of its less visible poetry and wisdom, it contains passages of tenderness and power, of wild fancy and sombre grandeur, that irresistibly chain the more imaginative class of readers. We know not, for instance, anything finer of its kind than the picture of Zanoni and Mejnour standing amidst the chaos of an unformed world, with the description so true to geological science, and so poetically impressive in itself, of that half-nebular limbo of struggling matter. But the master-spell of the work is in the character of the mysterious hero. Other writers had before conceived the idea of a life prolonged for ages, and enriched by premature knowledge; and the character of the mere magician is familiar enough to romance, whether northern or Oriental. But Zanoni differs from all such previous creations. His existence, dating from the dominion of the Chaldean, is no mournful curse, no survival of the zest and freshness of youth; it is as the glorious immortality of a Greek Apollo, identifying itself with light and beauty. His magic is no gloomy and criminal art, but a mastery over the lawful secrets of nature; to be attained but by dauntless will, by self-conquest, by the subordination of flesh to spirit. His love, to which, after ages of celestial purity from mortal passion, he bows himself at last, is conceived and depicted with marvellous delicacy: it takes from humanity just sufficient for living interest, and soon soars away from the earth to become divine. But "ZANONI," to be thoroughly appreciated, must not only be read, but studied; it gains a new beauty with every perusal.

Meanwhile, the author had still found time to continue his career as a dramatist. The "SEA CAPTAIN" was produced at the Haymarket, *but its success*, though unequivocal, was inferior to that of the "LADY

OF LYONS" and "RICHELIEU." After a continuous run of thirty nights, the author withdrew it from the stage, and has since, we understand, entirely re-written it; with a view, no doubt, to stage-performance at some future period, since it is not included in the recent collection of his plays. The brilliant success of "MONEY," soon subdued all cavil on the "SEA CAPTAIN." "MONEY" had even a longer run on its first performance than the "SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL," and is still perhaps the most attractive comedy on the modern stage.

In prose fiction our author now looked round for new materials, and entered at last upon the ground of English historical romance. This field had been so cultivated by Scott, and gleaned so bare by Scott's imitators, that experiment here was eminently perilous. But, as an able critic in the *Edinburgh Review* has remarked, Bulwer looked to history for the elements of romance in quarters which no one had before examined. He did not, as Scott and Victor Hugo have done, with effects so picturesque and brilliant, invent some story in which the main agents were wholly or half fictitious; and then constrain the great characters, or leading events of history, to come to the relief of the scene, or bend to the necessities of the plot. But in the "LAST OF THE BARONS," he took history itself, placed it fairly on the scene, and from the real characters and the actual events, evolved their own truthful romance. In this work, the contemporary chronicles are ransacked, the exact antiquities of the time are diligently studied, the precise dates are explored and rectified, and the characters of the age are given with as earnest and conscientious a desire to interpret them faithfully, as if the work were composed as a history; thus, the chief attraction of the book is in the brilliant gallery of contemporary portraits, Edward IV.; Henry VI.; the grand, affectionate, wayward, fiery King-Maker, the accomplished, able, inconstant Hastings; the portentous youth of Richard of Gloucester, learned and witty, dauntless and aspiring, with the intellect trained at Utrecht, and darkened by Italian craft, but still the Plantagenet to whom Caxton dedicated his Book of Chivalry—all are given without one touch of caricature or exaggeration. Where fictitious characters are introduced, it is never to disturb the real events of history, but rather to illustrate its social and moral bearings. Thus Adam Warner, with the invention that forestalled his time, or Sibyl, with the sentiment and instruction that were in advance of her sex, serve by their contrast, and their melancholy fate, to deepen our sense of the spirit of the age in which they lived and suffered.

In the preface to this romance, Bulwer stated that it might possibly be the last prose fiction he should compose. We believe that he had then formed plans, and indeed commenced negotiations, for the completion of his "HISTORY OF ATHENS," and for an elaborate national

history, viz., "THE LIVES AND TIMES OF THE PLANTAGENET KINGS," works which would necessarily occupy many years. But shortly after the publication of the "LAST OF THE BARONS," these plans were laid aside, or indefinitely postponed. By the death of his mother (December, 1843) Sir Edward succeeded to the representation of her family (taking, according to the conditions of her will, the sirname of Lytton), and to the cares and duties of extensive landed possessions. His health, always delicate, was much weakened at this period, as he has stated in the pleasant *brochure* entitled, "CONFESSIONS OF A WATER PATIENT," and after trying the hydropathic system for some time with effect, more or less beneficial, he was ordered to recruit his constitution by complete relaxation from mental labour, and being then out of Parliament, he had the leisure to resume his excursions on the Continent, and for some years divided his time between foreign travel and residence at his seat in Hertfordshire.

It was not till about four years after the "LAST OF THE BARONS," that he again published a prose romance. But in the interval, he had not been wholly idle: his masterly translation of the "POEMS OF SCHILLER," had been given to the world. The poem of the "NEW TIMON," issued anonymously, in serial parts, had taken the town by storm, and indeed caused a sensation not equalled by any poem since the death of Byron. In the romance that he now issued, there was ample evidence that in his own more acknowledged domain his powers were not relaxed by disuse. "LUCRETIA; OR, THE CHILDREN OF NIGHT," rather errs from the over-exertion of strength; the intense vigour of its descriptions is not sufficiently restrained by art, and carries terror too far into the region of pain. In his recent edition of "LUCRETIA," Bulwer seems to have acknowledged this fault, and has most judiciously preserved the gentler heroine from the fate to which the poisoners had condemned her in the earlier plot of the work.

Lucretia Dalibard is a creation of wonderful force, and the gradual corruption of her intellect into habitual crime, is traced with the profound acumen of the accomplished metaphysician. An old outcry against the author for morbid indulgence in the delineation of crime was raised by a portion of the press, to which Bulwer condescended to reply, in the pamphlet called, "A WORD TO THE PUBLIC." In this *brochure*, the author speaks of himself with a dignified and quiet modesty; but he argues with critical logic, enforced by copious illustrations from the greatest poets, ancient and modern,—that in the delineating the struggles and the chastisement of crime consists one of the most acknowledged and legitimate elements of tragic interest, and poetic ethics. The pamphlet amply vindicated the moral of "LUCRETIA," and silenced its assailants; but the fault in art, to which we have

alluded, still forbade to the Novel the extensive popularity of its predecessors. Simultaneously with "LUCRETIA," had been commenced the novel of the "CAXTONS," intended to be its fellow pendant. The two works united were designed to show the influence upon the formation of character on the destinies of life: "LUCRETIA" took the darker side, the "CAXTON FAMILY" took the brighter, and it shows the difference of success produced by the creation of agreeable emotions in preference to painful; that while "LUCRETIA," working out the same moral through different agencies, was of all the author's fictions the most questioned in point of moral intention, the moral bequeathed by the "CAXTON FAMILY" has received universal approbation; and while "LUCRETIA" has been the least popular of this long series of romance, the "CAXTON FAMILY" was the most so, until the publication of "MY NOVEL." Yet in point of native power, of breathless interest, in metaphysical analysis of the human heart, there are probably few sound critics who will not rank "LUCRETIA" higher than the "CAXTONS." This latter novel was now given to *Blackwood's Magazine*, in which it appeared monthly, without the author's name. It was not long before it seized hold of public attention, and met with a general admiration, increased on its appearance as a whole.

In the meanwhile, Bulwer returned to English history, and produced the highest of his historical romances, "HAROLD, THE LAST OF THE SAXON KINGS," a work well deserving the title of Prose Epic, bestowed on it by an antiquarian and a poet, in the *Edinburgh Review*. Its structure is more compact, its plot more single than those of the "LAST OF THE BARONS;" its catastrophe in the fall of a dynasty and the revolution of an entire race, is more grand than that which involves the fate of Warwick, as the battle of Hastings more affected the destinies of the world than the field of Barnet. So also the antiquarian erudition in "HAROLD" is more profound and more copious, than that in the "LAST OF THE BARONS," and relieved by a more vivid exercise of imagination. The Runic witchcraft of Hilda—the giant valour of the sea-king Hardrada—the prophetic visions of the dying Confessor—all the images of awe and pity which gather round the hero-form of our Saxon Harold, foreshadowing his bloody and glorious end, belong to the noblest province of that species of poetry which tinges the actual life of man in the hues of enchanted superstition; all, too, are removed from the childishness of wanton fancy—all are truly taken from the temper of the age, and the annals of the chroniclers. So truly national is this work in its spirit, and so replete with interest and value is the information it contains, whether of manners, customs, the origin of various races that people our island, the causes of political events that, however remote have bequeathed

influences which rule us at this day, that the careful perusal of "HAROLD" becomes almost the duty of every well-instructed Englishman.

All this while, amidst his other occupations, Bulwer had been slowly completing the work on which he himself relies the most for an audience in posterity. "KING ARTHUR," by the author of the "NEW TIMON," appeared, like its predecessors, anonymously and in parts; and though, as yet, it has not reached that wide circle of the public which Bulwer has always needed to counteract the jealous hostilities with which every single effort of his in each new direction has been invariably met by prejudiced decriers, it is certain ultimately to justify the tranquil confidence of its author. There is a natural reluctance in the mind of general readers to approach a subject of remote date, and demanding a certain strain upon the intellect; but when the perusal is fairly begun, the interest in the narrative itself becomes vivid, and sustains itself with delight, constantly increasing towards the close: all the poet's rich artistic experience of the conception and development of plot is brought to bear upon the progress of the whole,—all the play of his various powers exhibits itself in the most enchanting forms. We find his humour and his wit in the description of the Vandal king, and the adventures of Gawaine,—his deepest and tenderest vein of sentiment in the beautiful love-scenes between the Etrurian Ægle and the Cymrian king or the angelic guardianship of the mystic dove; what easy control over the passions of terror and pity in the wild scenes on the frozen main,—the grim and vast antediluvian vestiges in the haunted cavern,—the death of Ægle,—the sublimer fate of Caradoc, the herobard; how animated the pictures of old chivalric life—its revels, its wanderings, its knightly conflicts; what august philosophy in the solemn image of Merlin,—in the allegories that light up the Halls of Time, and speak the truths of life from the lips of Necessity and Nature on the Threshold of Death. But our limits will not allow us to do justice here to a poem requiring the most elaborate analysis illustrated by copious extracts. The fame of this genial epic will be assured and lasting whenever some critic, with competent authority and judgment, shall accomplish for "KING ARTHUR" the task that Addison achieved for Paradise Lost. Its pictures require but to be placed in the light in order to attract the crowd.

We should here touch briefly on Bulwer's last dramatic composition. The causes that conduced to it are well known. In the autumn of 1850, a large party of friends, eminent in letters and art,—Charles Dickens, Douglas Jerrold, Mark Lemon, John Forster,—and the artists Egg, Leach, Stone, and, we believe, Maclise, had assembled at Knebworth, and delighted a rural audience with the exhibition of their *theatrical* talents in Ben Jonson's comedy, "*Every Man to his Humour.*"

Before separating, the conversation turned upon the melancholy condition of a well-known man of letters; and the idea was started to perform a play in the provinces, the profits of which should be applied to the relief of certain authors in distress. "But why not to the foundation of some permanent fund for the aid of all writers struggling against fortune now and hereafter? Why not to the establishment of fixed annuities, rather than the temporary relief to which the laws of the Literary Fund confine that institution? Why not to the formation of a joint benefit society,—such as the trading classes found for themselves, and from which the idea of eleemosynary degradation is properly excluded? Why not couple with such a society some of the useful and dignified objects of a college?" Such were the various suggestions that grew out of the first proposals, and into which Bulwer entered with all the earnestness he has ever evinced for whatever can benefit or raise men of letters by profession. "If you will act a play," said he, "I will write it. If we can gain money enough to found retreats for authors—whatever name we decide to bestow on those retreats—I will give you the land." All present pledged themselves with enthusiasm to this undertaking. The comedy of "NOT SO BAD AS WE SEEM" was thus written. The plan was made known to the Duke of Devonshire, and received his grace's cordial co-operation. A room in the duke's house was fitted up for a theatre, and the play was there acted for the first time before her Majesty and his Royal Highness Prince Albert. It was afterwards transferred to the Hanover Square Rooms, thence it went the round of the provinces. The comedy itself, written as a *pièce d'occasion*, adapted to the peculiar talents of selected amateur performers, and with little relief from female interest, is not to be judged according to very severe rules of criticism. As a play of character, it is excellent,—as a play of interest, it is deficient; and the scenes and situations, though often strong in themselves, are not connected sufficiently with the absolute necessities of the plot. Bulwer's real merit here is not in the play, it is in the objects for which the play was composed. The joint efforts of a handful of men, earnest in behalf of their brethren, have already realized more than 3,000*l.* towards the formation of a design which, if properly supported by the public, and carried out with practical judgment, will command for those engaged in its accomplishment the lasting gratitude of all who have been compelled to make literature not their staff but their crutch.

We now come to the two prose fictions with which our collection is closed. The surpassing popularity that has attended the "CAXTON FAMILY" and "MY NOVEL; OR, VARIETIES IN ENGLISH LIFE," may perhaps be traced to their ample demonstration of a faculty in which, at least in prose, our author had previously given but partial glimpses —the faculty of *pleasant humour*. Wit, indeed, abounds to redundance

in "PELHAM,"—"DEVEREUX,"—"PAUL CLIFFORD," and in the earlier part of "ENGLAND AND THE ENGLISH;" but wit, logical and sarcastic: humour, is also visible in those and in others of their successors before the "CAXTONS,"—as in the Corporal Bunting of "EUGENE ARAM," the Lumley Ferrers of "ERNEST MALTRAVERS," &c.,—but a humour somewhat saturnine and Juvenalian, rather bringing into contempt the vices and errors of men,—than playing *circum præcordia*, as in the mode of Horace, winning affection to the virtues, with which it establishes a cordial if sportive kindred. This faculty, therefore, of *genial* humour,—the humour of Goldsmith, not of Swift,—had been long denied by his critics to Bulwer. This was precisely the faculty in which he now displayed himself most familiarly at home, and which has since established in the smiling affection of every fireside the family of "CAXTON," and the Squire and Parson of Hazeldean. In both these novels—for we must treat them as of the same class, though one takes a far wider range than the other—there is also a more practical survey of life than is habitual to their predecessors. The feelings addressed are those with which we are all more familiar,—the characters are less idealized, more palpable and actual. Perhaps, however, the merits of these two works were more universally acknowledged from the first than those of fictions equally stamped by genius, less from the presence of new beauties than from the absence of peculiarities in tone and manner which the taste of certain readers regarded as defects. Their moral, also, is thoroughly intelligible, and admits of no question—the moral of works like "PAUL CLIFFORD,"—"EUGENE ARAM,"—"MALTRAVERS." "ZANONI" is more metaphysical, and demands some stretch of the reason to embrace; but the moral of the "CAXTON FAMILY" and of "MY NOVEL" can be felt by a child,—it runs broadly and healthfully along the whole composition, sporting with us by the way, and leaving us happier and better at the close. The "CAXTON FAMILY," as a composition of art, is, however, modelled on principles distinct from those of "MY NOVEL." In the first the characters are extremely few, and the interest simple and concentrated. In "MY NOVEL," on the contrary, it is the astonishing variety of characters, all equally elaborate, and the rich complexities of interest, all harmonized into one easy whole, that engage our admiration. In a word, one is the picture of a home, the other the mirror of an age. It is from its immense breadth of comprehension,—its mature repose of thought,—its felicitous selection of the results of a most diversified experience, that "MY NOVEL" is indeed *par emphasis* entitled to the name it assumes; and if not the loftiest of Bulwer's works, is certainly his completest novel.

We have now named all the prose fictions composed by the author, and which, receiving his last corrections, will be found in this edition. *But we must* pause briefly to glance over the characteristics he has

developed, and the reputation he has gained in other departments of literature, less to criticise therein his individual performances than to illustrate from the aggregate his especial character as a novelist and romance writer. Bulwer has appeared before the world not only as a novelist, but as an essayist and critic,—an historian, dramatist, and poet,—a political writer, an orator, and a statesman. His success in each may be various and graduated, but in all it has been striking and decisive. As an essayist, the grace and sentiment of "THE STUDENT," and the sparkling vivacity and copious information of "ENGLAND AND THE ENGLISH," sufficiently attest his powers. As a critic, independently of the analytical passages contained in the above-mentioned works, and scattered throughout his fictions, his performances have been less frequent, and appearing anonymously in periodicals, have been less traced to their author. We may here mention some which we are warranted to ascribe to his pen, and which, as their excellence is unquestionable, we trust he may hereafter collect :—

1st. The criticism on the writings of Sir Thomas Browne (published in the *Edinburgh Review*); 2nd. A review of the History of English Literature (art. Chateaubriand, *ibid.*); 3rd. Life and Genius of Goldsmith (art. Forster's Life of Goldsmith, *ibid.*); 4th. Bolingbroke and the Times of Anne (*Westminster Review*); 5th. Gray the Poet (*ibid.*); and, 6th. A most admirable article on the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror (in the *Foreign Quarterly*). As an historian, his work on the RISE AND FALL OF ATHENS has never yet been completed; the two volumes issued were written while the author was still in his early youth; the work must therefore be regarded as a massive and noble fragment, rather indicative of extraordinary promise, than entitling the writer to rank with acknowledged historians. It must not, however, be forgotten, that it was written before the elaborate histories of Thirlwall and Grote had appeared, and while Mitford had left unvindicated the popular side of Grecian history. Bulwer's work was therefore the first to take the annals of Athens out of the narrow range to which previous historians, writing as party pamphleteers, had confined immortal lessons. And the arrangement of the work, in illustrating the chronicles of events by views of literature, art, and progressive civilization, has been more or less imitated by all succeeding historians, though they have not acknowledged their obligations. His capacities for historical composition, evinced by "ATHENS," are confirmed by the minute research and grasp of detail which are shown in "RIENZI," "THE LAST OF THE BARONS," and "HAROLD." And we hope that the author will scarcely consider his literary career completed until he has executed his own earlier designs, not only in the conclusion of the "HISTORY OF ATHENS," but in the more national, more fresh, and more popular subject, so adapted to his genius, which is to be found in "THE LAST

AND TIMES OF OUR PLANTAGENET KINGS." Then we may hope to see brought into familiar display the real influences of chivalry, and the gradual foundation of that union between law and freedom which forms the compact between an English people and an English throne. Almost equal to his fame as a novelist is Bulwer's popularity as a dramatist. No plays, save only those of Shakspeare, are so constantly brought upon our stage as "THE LADY OF LYONS," "RICHELIEU," and "MONEY." And their vogue has been progressive; they are received now with even greater applause than attended their earliest performance.

Nor, were the merits of the author in other departments of poetry to be denied, could any critic in his senses dispute, that the acted versified drama is in itself one of the severest tests of the highest powers of a poet, and that the sway over the passions, accompanied with the charm of melodious verse, which marks the scenes between Pauline and her erring lover,—or the haughty scorn of Richelieu, when, daunting Baradas in the flush of the courtier's triumph, he draws round the form of his trembling ward the circle of the Holy Church, bespeaks a poetry of an order incomparably more high than the metaphysical stanzas in which three-fourths of our recent versifiers convey subtle conceits in fastidious diction. But it is not to his dramas alone that Bulwer need confine his ultimate triumphs as a poet. The volumes in which he has recently collected all that, hitherto accomplished in verse, he seems disposed to bequeath to posterity, bespeak his mastery over yet sweeter sounds of the shell and yet stronger chords of the lyre. The failure of his first published attempt, "THE SIAMESE TWINS,"—the indisposition of the public to grant merit to one whose popular fame has been obtained as a writer of prose,—the prevalent fashion for the moment of schools at variance with the polished ease with which he adapts varying melodies to established laws,—have retarded the recognition of his poetical genius in "KING ARTHUR." But that recognition must come with time; and he can afford calmly to await the sentence, which even now is slowly passing through the ordeal of select appreciators to the court of the wider public.

As a Political Writer, no one living has attained the same wide success for brilliancy and force, whether in the pamphlet called "THE CRISIS," or that in which he lavishes such stores of information and such lively wit, "THE LETTERS TO JOHN BULL." We grant that in the latter he argues for a cause that was already lost. Not, indeed, that the pamphlet pleads for *Protection*;—some years before it would have been considered the essay of a Free-trader;—it is rather a *résumé* of all the arguments advanced by political economists *and statesmen* in favour of a fixed duty. Our generation has disposed,

no doubt wisely, of this dispute; but the pamphlet itself will long remain a model of polemical style, and a repertory of thoughtful knowledge.

In treating of Bulwer as an orator, we must glance rapidly over his Parliamentary career. He entered the House of Commons at a very early age, as a supporter of the Reform Bill. His maiden speech on that question was respectable in point of success, but gave little promise of his gifts as a speaker. Before his first session had expired he gained, however, considerable reputation by the speech with which he introduced his celebrated motion for the repeal of the taxes on knowledge,—a speech complimented by both sides of the House, and producing a considerable effect upon the measures of the Government.* In the same session he obtained a committee to inquire into the laws affecting the drama; and his opening speech on this question was also a decided success. He afterwards introduced and carried a Bill to grant stage copyright to written dramas.

But the two occasions on which he first showed the true passion and power of the orator were some years later, on the question as to the propriety of members of Parliament subscribing for the expenses of petitioners against the return of the liberal Irish members; a party contribution which he indignantly condemned, as unjust in itself, and unconstitutional in its spirit; and still more effectively, on the motion for the immediate emancipation of the West India slaves. On this latter speech the House divided, and to the effect it produced the majority which annulled the two remaining years appointed to negro apprenticeship was universally ascribed. The speech was printed at the request and expense of the delegates from the Religious Societies in favour of immediate emancipation. We ourselves have heard Mr. O'Connell describe it as one of the most vigorous efforts of impassioned reasoning that he had ever heard in the House of Commons.

In 1842, Bulwer lost his seat for Lincoln; his views on the Corn Law not being sufficiently those of Free-traders to please one party, nor sufficiently in favour of Protection to secure the other. He remained out of Parliament for ten years. In the last general election his former constituency of Lincoln offered to return him free of expense, and without even the trouble of a personal canvass; but he had resolved to stand for the county of Hertford, in which his property is placed, and which his ancestors had frequently represented.

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* To Bulwer's efforts, indeed, must be ascribed the merit of the reduction of the newspaper stamp and advertisement duties, made by Mr. Spring Rice.

He was victorious after a severe contest with the Hon. T. Brand (now Lord Dacre). It was in this long interval of retirement from public life that his political opinions, or his party preferences, received modification or change. His obstinate resistance to the total repeal of the Corn Law (in which, at least, he had the merit of consistency since the year 1834, when he had first voted against it) naturally divided him from the bulk of the Liberal party, who, on all occasions had, for that reason, forgetful of his other services to freedom, opposed his return to Parliament. He had never very cordially acted with the Whigs; indeed, at that time, they were losing ground with many of their former admirers. A new school of Radicals had succeeded to the old, the former bonds of party were generally rent asunder; Sir Edward pronounced himself in favour of a fair trial to Lord Derby's government, and shortly after his return to the present Parliament he delivered his sentiments to that effect in a speech, characterized by Mr. D'Israeli as, "one of the most masterly ever given to the House;" and which evinced a remarkable improvement in all the essentials of oratory. He spoke once again in the Session of 1853, upon his own motion against the enactment of the Income-tax on its former footing; and although it was only a few hours previously that, at the general request of his party, he had undertaken the motion, and he was necessarily, therefore, forbidden time for preparation, his speech shows complete familiarity with the best principles of finance, conveyed with great lucidity, and argued with manly force.

The perseverance and determination to succeed in whatever he attempts, that mark Bulwer's general temperament and character, are the most perhaps evinced in the extraordinary progress he has made in an art, to which, it is well known, that his taste disinclines him. For he is not one of those who love speaking for speaking's sake; he requires strong motive, and earnest conviction, to call forth his best powers as a speaker; and his happiest efforts have perhaps, hitherto, been made out of the walls of Parliament: within those walls, his ultimate reputation will probably rest upon the chance of great occasions to rouse his sympathies. At present, he has all the elements of success in his favour; a voice pliant and well modulated, though somewhat too deep in its medium tones to be heard clearly at a distance, a dignified, yet easy delivery, more than common advantages of countenance and stature, combined with such qualifications for chaining attention as are derived from large possessions, ancient birth, and the union of social rank with literary renown.

It is in reviewing the various accomplishments of this laborious mind, and the diversified field of study and action through which its experience must have passed, that we can best comprehend Bulwer's *peculiar merits as* a writer of fiction. For in these have converged all

the many rays of his intellect—poetry, philosophy, criticism, scholarship, vivid imagination, and practical knowledge of multiform life. Hence, the immensity of their range; hence, of all novelists, he is the one who repeats himself the least. You can never guess by the last fiction what will be the next, and each has its own peculiar set of admirers. Most readers agree, in general, as to the best works of an author—it is not so with Bulwer. If a party of twelve persons were to discuss the merits of his novels, no three would agree as to the one to which they assigned the preference. At one period of his career it was the fashion amongst his decriers, to speak of him with a sneer, as "the Author of 'PELHAM,'" as if that single work were the type of his whole genius. But nowhere, in any other author, can we find varieties of power so marked as those which contrast the airy liveliness of "PELHAM" with the solemn gloom of "EUGENE ARAM;" the sportive fancies of the "PILGRIMS OF THE RHINE" with the severe grandeur of "RIENZI;" the stately epic of "HAROLD" with the charming comedy of the "CAXTONS;" or the ideal visions of "ZANONI" with the practical lessons of "MY NOVEL." So, too, at one time, it was a received reproach against the breadth of his genius, that he painted himself in his heroes—a reproach which might as well be alleged against Shakspeare; for no two of his heroes resemble each other, and yet into each of the more prominent he throws impartial vitality and power. How distinct is Pelham from Algernon Mordaunt, Paul Clifford from Eugene Aram, Ernest Maltravers from Philip Morton, Zanoni from Pisistratus Caxton. To no one English writer, perhaps, can the epithet "many sided," coined for Goethe, be so well applied as to Bulwer; and this not only from the extent and depth of his studies, but from the accidents of his life and the energy of his temperament.

By the hints scattered through his writings, and by what is known of his career, we can trace him through so many forms of society, and observe him at home in all. The child escaping from his stately home to the hearth of cottagers;* the school-boy, vehement in sport, and dauntless in combat; the Cambridge student, declaiming at the Debating Society, and employing the long vacations to wander over England and Scotland, alone and on foot; the young man of fashion at ease in the gay circles of London and Paris, and lightly adventuring into the haunts of thieves and outlaws, to learn the manners depicted in "PELHAM" and "PAUL CLIFFORD;" the secluded scholar studying metaphysics and Greek in rural solitudes; the active member of Parliament, contesting elections, participating in the dry toil of com-

* See "THE STUDENT," art. Knebworth.

mittees, and the animated field-days of debate; the accomplished traveller studying æsthetics in Germany, and antiquities in Rome; the hospitable country gentleman, the oracle of farmers, and the companion of squires,—through all such phases passed the man who has traced with so easy a skill, the "VARIETIES OF ENGLISH LIFE." And in all this he has been true to his own favourite maxim—"that the duty of man is not to be one thing alone, but to accomplish, as far as possible, all the faculties of his mind, and the faculties will lead of themselves to the objects in which he is most fitted to excel." "If," says Goethe, "we do but our duty to our own minds, we shall soon come to do it to the world." And in Bulwer this comprehensiveness of study and life has been preserved from that satiety and weariness which often attends extreme cultivation by an energy that seems never to know repose, and which all temporary failure, all hostile criticism, has only nerved into more stubborn perseverance. No writer has owed so little to partizanship and cliques—no writer been so assailed at the commencement of his career, and at each new direction of his powers; he has never used his social influence to obtain favourers in the press—he has descended to none of the acts by which authors are forced into notoriety by reviewers—he has fought his way to his present eminence singlehanded, and owes his success even less to his genius, than (to use the expressive English word, for the stout English quality), his indomitable *pluck*.

It must also be alleged, in his favour, that few writers, with equal command of the weapons of irony and sarcasm, have, on the whole, written with so little bitterness against hostile critics or literary foes, while none have more cordially welcomed and cheered on every new rival in the same field. He has seized every occasion to vindicate the dignity of letters, and identify himself with what he has emphatically called his "Order;" he has never sneered at and decried "the author by profession;" the acquisition of title, lands, wealth, and commanding station, has left him still the same earnest student, the same cordial friend of all that share with honour the same laborious ambition to delight and to instruct. What he may yet do, if health and life be spared to him, it is difficult to conjecture; for his powers have not yet found that limit at which criticism can justly say, "So far, and no farther." But already, though yet in the vigour of mature manhood, at an age in which Scott had scarcely commenced his career of fame, he has achieved a reputation which may be fairly judged a test of the opinion posterity will pass; since it has not been coddled into growth by *coteries* and *claqueurs;* since it has resisted the sharpest assaults, the unsparing exposition of every fault, the grudging dis*parage*ment of every beauty. Of all our living authors, by far the

most admired in America and on the Continent, especially amongst the thoughtful public of the North, his genius, year by year, has risen more and more into the just appreciation of his own countrymen. And his writings are more popular after the lapse of time, and the ordeal of criticism, than they were when they first forced their hardy way into envied favour. Hence the confidence which the Publishers of this edition repose in the multitude to whom it is more especially addressed. The time has come when our people can connect value of substance with economy of price. And there is nothing that more interests the masses than a survey of the intellectual attributes of the age in which they live. Those attributes are most visible in the works of their contemporaneous writers; and in none are they so earnest, yet multiform, as in the volumes now brought within the reach of all who desire to purchase, in order to study, what they read.

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luminous imagination, and a commanding reason. In this the art that they display, true to the Nature it explores, seeks everywhere to establish the harmonies of wise design, and track from effect to cause the merciful wisdom of controlling Providence.

W.

December, 1853.

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Both these must be regarded as bold and rapid sketches, by a master-hand, rather than elaborate and finished performances of careful art.

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So truly national is this work in its spirit, and so replete with interest and value is the information it contains, whether of manners, customs, the origin of various races that people our island, the causes of political events that, however remote, have bequeathed influences which rule us at this day, that the careful perusal of "HAROLD" becomes almost the duty of every well-instructed Englishman.

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